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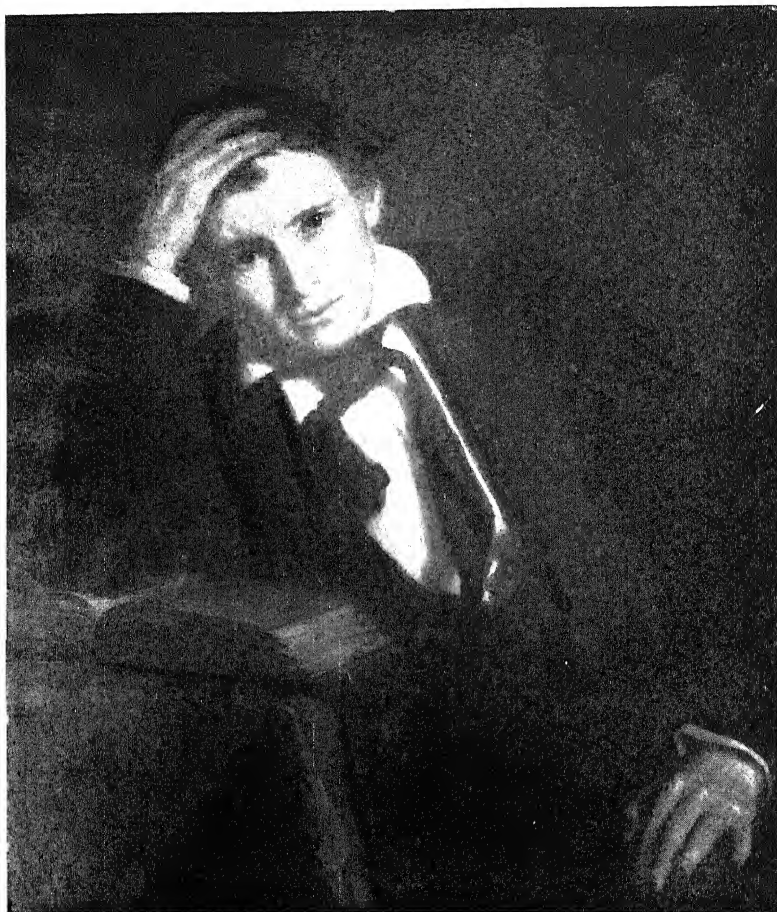
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LITTLE ALECK



Alexander H. Stephens



LITTLE ALECK

A Life of
ALEXANDER H.
STEPHENS

*The Fighting Vice-President
of the Confederacy*

by
E. RAMSAY
RICHARDSON



Illustrated

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To
DAVID MARSHALL RAMSAY
*A Carolinian who has contributed generously
to the New South*

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FOREWORD

I AM grateful to Douglas S. Freeman, of Richmond, recognized authority upon the Confederate period, for calling my attention to the historical importance of Alexander H. Stephens and to the need for a life of the great little statesman. I am indebted to Doctor Freeman for suggesting obscure sources that might have escaped me.

I am grateful also to Henry Cleveland, who in 1866 published a book containing Alexander Stephens's speeches and a biographical sketch, the accuracy of which Mr. Stephens attested; to R. M. Johnston and W. H. Browne for the *Life of Alexander H. Stephens*, which appeared in 1878 and consists almost entirely of letters and diary excerpts; to James D. Waddell for building his *Life of Linton Stephens* around the correspondence of the Stephens brothers; to Myrta Lockett Avary for the careful editing of Alexander H. Stephens's diary; to Ulrich B. Phillips for collecting the Stephens, Toombs and Cobb correspondence; to the early biographers of distinguished Georgians, contemporaries of Little Aleck, who included in their books much Stephens material; and to Alexander H. Stephens for *A Constitutional View of the War between the States*, for his histories, and other publications that give clearly his stand on public questions—in other words, for sources that enabled me, without resorting to any fictitious conversation, to make my characters talk.

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Richmond, Virginia.

E. R. R.

LITTLE ALECK

LITTLE ALECK

CHAPTER I

THE ARREST AT LIBERTY HALL

THE little village of Crawfordville in eastern Georgia lay asleep in the May sunshine. The Civil War was at an end. A bit over a month before, General Lee had surrendered at Appomattox Court House. Stunned into consciousness of defeat, the people of the South were quietly awaiting the results of that surrender. Beneath the morning calm ran a current of uneasiness. For thirty years the leading citizen of Crawfordville had drawn the village into the national strife of which Appomattox was the climax. Now the people who loved him feared for his safety. Rumors that he and Robert Toombs, of the adjoining county, would be arrested had reached them. Within the stores men talked in subdued whispers. Now and then a woman peered through drawn curtains to be assured that all was quiet. At the railway station men stood in knots, waiting restlessly.

At nine-thirty a train steamed in and emptied its load of blue-coated soldiers. A negro boy broke away from the loiterers and ran, ashen-face and wild-eyed, toward the big house at the edge of the village.

At Liberty Hall there was a peace that had not presaged disaster. Hard by the Baptist Church, where people of all faiths assembled for weekly worship, stretched the plantation, seemingly untouched by the cataclysm that had shattered the country. Through the grove of locusts, hickories and cedars the sun spilled upon the turf.

An air of comfort and quiet dignity pervaded the house.

There were statelier homes in Georgia but none where guests were happier. Large and square it was, with an ell at its rear. Down-stairs and up, four rooms opened into the large center hall. Along the ell was a side piazza that looked toward fields, which faithful slaves had cultivated even during the darkest days of the war. At the front of the house was a quaint square portico around which flowers bloomed in semi-tropical profusion. In the parlor the owner sat playing casino with Robert Hull, a young man from Athens, who had spent the night before at Liberty Hall. He had dressed with the assistance of Tim, his serving boy, had breakfasted in the dining-room above the rose-patterned carpet, with the green and gold shades raised so that the morning light might shine upon the ancient extension table and reveal the silent handless clock upon the mantel and the picture of the frozen traveler guarded by his faithful St. Bernard dogs. Then he had written a few letters, which he had dispatched by the hand of Tim. Now he sat in the parlor, playing casino with his friend. Here, whenever he was at home, there were guests for the morning game that served as a pleasant hiatus between labors, for the old hotel in Crawfordville, now grayheaded and leaning lazily toward the street, was not so attractive as the free hospitality obtainable at Liberty Hall.

A strange figure was this little man who sat intent upon the cards that fluttered between his tremulous fingers. Less than a hundred pounds he weighed, though he measured five feet ten. His sallow face was traced by myriads of fine lines. The only features that seemed alive were the large, dark eyes that burned from out their macabre setting. Though ill and now beset by danger, the little man could not be entirely unhappy at Liberty Hall. He loved the village of Crawfordville, the Old Homestead a few miles away, where he had spent the first years of his meager childhood, the house and plantation that he had bought with his

first considerable earnings—and this parlor of his utterly delighted him. He himself had selected the green carpet with its colored arabesque design. He would often sit studying the engraving on the mantel, of Webster during the great speech of 1850, remembering how he had welcomed the Unionist's stand in favor of compromise and how sanguine he himself had been concerning the possibility of settling those sectional disputes in which he had taken no small part. Every object in the room had for the owner some sentimental association—the cigar case that was a prized gift from a "lady friend," the lithographs of himself and of his lifelong friend Robert Toombs, the oil paintings in their massive gilt frames, his own bust on a pillar of white and green marble done by J. Q. A. Ward, of Ohio, in 1859, and the Bible that contained his family registry. As the little man played casino with his young friend, he was resolutely keeping from his mind the uneasiness for his welfare that the townspeople were voicing to one another in awed whispers.

He looked up, however, when the negro boy rushed in from the station, panting and rolling his eyes in terror.

"Marse Aleck! De Yankees come. Whole heap, goin' 'bout de town wid guns," the boy gasped.

Marse Aleck rose feebly from his chair and tottered in the direction of his room. He knew that the Yankees had come for him. He had expected them, and he had been both unwilling to escape and too ill since his return from Richmond after the last conference with President Davis, which had followed the trying interview at Hampton Roads with Lincoln and Seward. There were just a few arrangements that he wanted to make. Then he would go willingly wherever orders would take him.

In a moment soldiers filled his yard. Officers walked heavily across his porch and stamped upon the mosaic pattern of the oilcloth in his hall. In western nasals the

commanding officer was asking for Alexander Hamilton Stephens. The little man squared his slim shoulders and advanced as firmly as his feeble body could carry him.

"Alexander Hamilton Stephens?"

The officer repeated his interrogation as though in doubt that so frail a person could bear so impressive a name as that of the Vice-President of the Confederacy.

The little man nodded. "That is my name," he said with dignity.

"I am Captain Saint, of the Fourth Iowa Cavalry, attached to General Nelson's command," the young man continued without bravado. "I have orders to arrest Alexander Hamilton Stephens and Robert Toombs."

"May I see your orders?"

The Captain produced them. Alexander Stephens examined the paper for a moment.

"There was no need to use force," he replied. "I should have given myself up had I known there were orders for my arrest. How are we to travel?"

"On the cars," said Captain Saint tersely.

"Will I be permitted to carry any clothing?"

"Yes."

"How much time shall I have for preparation?"

"A few minutes—as long as necessary."

As Harry, the colored man who, with his wife Eliza, ruled the domestic life at Liberty Hall, peered uneasily into the room, "You may take a servant with you," said Captain Saint.

"What will be our destination?"

"First, Atlanta; then, Washington City."

There was a black boy—Anthony—whom Stephens had brought from Richmond and who would doubtless be glad for a chance to return to his mother.

"Tell Anthony that I will take him. He must get ready at once," Alexander Stephens directed Harry.

While Tim was hurriedly packing the carpetbag and finding the warm clothing that Mr. Stephens needed even in summer, the secretary, Mr. Hidell, having heard the news in the village, arrived, as did Clarence, a nephew, with some fellow students from the academy. There were so many things that needed attention, so many directions that should be given! Yet time was short. Would some one look after his brother's widow and children, who were dependent on him? Would some one at once notify his brother Linton, who was nearer and dearer to him than any other person on earth? Hastily he scribbled a note to Linton, telling him briefly all that he knew concerning the arrest. There were things he should say about the progress of the work on the plantation during his absence. In the few minutes allowed him, however, Alexander Stephens had time only to urge Harry to make good use of his freedom, to be a law-abiding citizen, and to be sure to train his children right and to send them to school.

In fifteen minutes the little procession had started for the station—friends who gathered in rapidly increasing numbers, the servants, Clarence and the other boys from the academy—the negroes loud in their lamentations, the white people weeping less audibly.

The little man and the large company of soldiers, who had been sent to effect his arrest, boarded the train, which immediately puffed its way out of the station. Mr. Stephens was left four miles from Washington, Georgia, with twenty men to guard him, while the Captain and the rest of the company went in search of General Toombs. They would be back in an hour, said Captain Saint. A farmer permitted Mr. Stephens to rest in his house. When the dinner hour arrived, he apologetically shared with his guest the fried meat and bread, which he said was all he had. The afternoon wore on. Again at supper the frail little man tried to eat the rough fare that was offered him. Later the engine

returned, bringing food for the soldiers. Alexander Stephens looked eagerly for the robust body and jovial face of his friend, who had sustained him through many another ordeal.

"Where's Toombs?" he asked of the Captain, but the reply was evasive.

The engine pulled out again, and Mr. Stephens was left in doubt and perplexity. As a spring storm gathered, Alexander Stephens shivered beneath his greatcoat. On nights like this at Liberty Hall there was always a cheery fire in his study. Forlorn and lonely and ill and miserably apprehensive, he waited in the bare little farmhouse for whatever might be in store for him.

At nine the train returned. Walking across the damp ground, Mr. Stephens got his feet wet. At once his throat became sore, and a feverish condition was added to his general distress. The presence of Bob Toombs would have been infinitely comforting. Again he made inquiries of the Captain.

"Mr. Toombs flanked us," was the reply, rendered in so irate a tone that Alexander Stephens asked no further questions.

At eleven the travelers reached Barnett. There they waited an hour for the Atlanta train. The wind blew cold through the broken panes of the windows. Chilled to the bone, the frail little man shivered and ground his teeth together to prevent their chattering.

The next morning in General Upton's headquarters in Atlanta, Alexander Stephens was cheered by one familiar face. The negro on duty was Felix, who had been with Toombs and Stephens as cook during congressional days in Washington.

Visitors were allowed to speak briefly to the prisoner—the surgeon whom Captain Saint sent to prescribe for the cold the dampness of the evening before had in-

duced and a few friends who came offering money which Mr. Stephens thought unnecessary since he had with him five hundred and ninety dollars in gold.

When General Upton called the following day, the prisoner was so hoarse that he could not speak above a whisper. He learned, however, that Jefferson Davis had been captured and that C. C. Clay, accused of complicity in the assassination of President Lincoln, had surrendered himself. Mr. Stephens was sorry to learn that he and the former President of the Confederacy would be fellow travelers on their way to prison. When they had parted after the Hampton Roads Conference, their relations—somewhat strained during the entire period of the war—had reached a chilly climax. Alexander Stephens had expressed his determination to return to Georgia and await the catastrophe that seemed to him inevitable, and Jefferson Davis had continued optimistic as to the final result of the war if the South would put new zeal into its endeavors. Now Alexander Stephens steeled himself for the meeting, which he apprehended with increasing concern.

The view of Atlanta from his window was not conducive to a pleasant frame of mind. Everywhere were evidences of the heavy toll the war had exacted. He could see the ruins of the Atlanta Hotel. How many times he had there met in conference men who with him were trying to preserve the constitutional rights of the South and at the same time to save the Union! There in 1848 he had almost lost his life because he had resented being called a traitor to the South. Now he was held as prisoner, accused of treason against his country. He could see also the place where the Trout House had stood. There Douglas had spoken in 1860, supported by Stephens and others who believed that under his leadership the Union might escape destruction. Stephens had not been hopeful then. Now dark despair settled upon him.

On Sunday, May fourteenth, the journey was resumed toward its unknown destination. Mr. Stephens remembered that the day was the anniversary of his stepmother's death in 1826. Unhappiness, akin to that he was experiencing now, had assailed him on that long ago Sabbath. A week before, his father had died. The boy had known that the little family was to be separated. The thirty-nine years since that blighting morning had been filled with endeavor, which had come to this—imprisonment for treason and possibly execution. Of the alternatives, the latter seemed preferable.

At Crawfordville the train stopped for Alexander Stephens to pack a few additional things. A funereal crowd waited at the station. After all, it was comforting to know that his fellow townspeople loved him and suffered with him now. News came, however, of the illness of Linton. He had hoped for a word from his brother, had known that Linton would have been in Crawfordville if his coming had been within the realm of the possible.

There was hurried packing. There was time for a few good-bys and for further directions that concerned the welfare of the servants toward whom Alexander Stephens felt a paternal responsibility. Eliza and Harry and Tim would remain indefinitely to care for the place. He bethought himself of a colored boy Henry, who also had lived in Richmond, and secured permission for the lad to join the party.

Though Mr. Stephens knew that Jefferson Davis boarded the train at Barnett, he postponed as long as possible the meeting with his former colleague. At the river there were carriages to convey the prisoners from the train to the boat. Mr. and Mrs. Davis bowed as they passed. Clay, Stephens had heard, was not greatly concerned by the charges that had been placed against him, for he felt certain that he could easily establish his innocence. Stephens caught a glimpse of Mr. and Mrs. Davis and the officer who



LIBERTY HALL

guarded them. The nurse, carrying little Winnie Davis in her arms, asked to ride in the carriage with Mr. Stephens. Finally the procession, flanked on both sides by soldiers, started slowly through the weeping crowds that lined the road. Alexander Stephens bowed to the people who recognized him. It was as though he were part of a cortège, he thought sorrowfully.

The carriages arrived at the river bank after dark. The ground was rough and traced by deep ravines over which there were no footpaths. Mr. Stephens's throat was still sore; his head ached with acute neuralgia. As he tottered and almost fell, a major came to the rescue and supported him the rest of the way, attempting to cheer the feeble prisoner, who in turn made a valiant effort to share in the conversation. Several soldiers practically carried Alexander Stephens across the narrow plank that led to the deck. The boat was a river tug without a cabin. There were a few bunks, however, for the ladies of the party. The other prisoners (including Postmaster-General Reagan, General Joe Wheeler and four of his men; Governor Lubbock and his private secretary and Colonel Johnston of his staff; the ex-President's brother-in-law, Jefferson Davis Howell; and young Monroe, grandson of Judge Monroe, of Kentucky) had to remain all night on the open deck. The ex-President went below with the ladies.

Against the air, that blew chill from the ocean, the prisoners huddled together for protection. Alexander Stephens was cold despite the flannels he wore, the heavy suit and the two cloaks in which he wrapped himself. The neuralgia and the ache in his throat had grown steadily worse. He had had nothing to eat since breakfast, and he heard of no provisions being made ready for supper. General Wheeler lent him a blanket, and Mrs. Davis sent a mattress. These and his shawl he shared with Clay. Carpetbags served as pillows. Yet from sheer exhaustion he slept soundly.

The next morning the prisoners were given a soldier's breakfast. The lunch at noon consisted of beef stew, potatoes, bread and black coffee. During the day Davis and Stephens met on deck and shook hands. Their commonplace greeting was polite, if not cordial.

At four o'clock the morning of May sixteenth the tug reached Savannah. At eleven the prisoners were transferred to the *Clyde*, which was to bear them northward. The time had come when Jimmy, the little colored boy who had been young Jeff Davis's playmate from infancy, had to be torn from his young master. Mrs. Davis had written a letter to General Saxton, in charge of colonization in South Carolina, asking that provision be made for the negro boy. On the deck of the *Clyde*, Mr. Stephens witnessed the parting. Both lads, whose ages appeared to be about seven, set up such a wailing as he had never heard. Finally by force Jimmy was taken from the boat. On the wharf he kicked and screamed and fought despairingly. Some one threw a coin, which was picked up and handed him. He would have none of it, however. He wanted his Jeff, and Jeff wanted his Jimmy. As the steamer put out to sea, Jimmy's cries grew fainter and fainter, to be drowned at last in the incessant swishing of the waves.

No dinner was provided that day for the prisoners. Rations were on board, it transpired, but there were no orders for cooking them. Mr. Stephens tipped the steward to bring him some bread. That evening the prisoners paid for a dinner that had been prepared from the ship's supplies, for which Mrs. Davis had made the arrangements. Though meals were furnished the prisoners the next day, the poor creatures had no interest in food, for the sea was rough and the passengers were desperately sick. Poor Anthony groaned on the floor of Mr. Stephens's stateroom and begged not to be left to die alone. The white woman and the negress—servants of the Davises—were so ill that Mr. and

Mrs. Davis, with such assistance as was volunteered, took charge of the baby.

On the evening of May nineteenth anchor was cast at Hampton Roads. How well Alexander Stephens recalled the last time he had been upon those waters and the inconsequential outcome of his interview with the President of the United States! He had left that conference with forebodings heavy upon him. Indeed it seemed that some prescience had enabled him to foresee the happenings that had crowded into the last week.

Two days the ship lay at anchor, awaiting orders from Washington. Alexander Stephens sent Henry ashore, bidding him go at once to Richmond in search of his mother. He urged the boy to spend wisely the ten dollars he gave him, to work hard, and never, never to gamble. Piously Henry made his promises and departed in sorrow. The good-bys and injunctions to Anthony followed. Mrs. Davis, standing near, besought the Captain in charge, in view of Mr. Stephens's feebleness, not to take both servants from him. Her entreaties were unavailing, however. For the first time since his youth the little man, whose friends had always believed that he could not live from year to year, was left with no one to look after him.

The farewell between Jefferson Davis and Alexander Stephens was fraught with emotion on the part of both men. Though they had not agreed concerning secession, though they had been diametrically opposed in public policies, they had worked for a common cause; both loved the South; and both, having followed their different courses, were suffering because of loyalty to a land to which they thought their allegiance due. For a long moment Mr. Davis squeezed the frail hand that was laid into his, and then turned away. Though their minds remained divergent, the hearts of the two men were united in grief. Jefferson Davis was to be imprisoned at Fortress Monroe. Alexander

Stephens and Judge Reagan were to be carried to Fort Warren in Boston Harbor.

It was the morning of May twenty-fifth that Alexander Stephens heard the grating of the key that locked him in the damp underground room at Fort Warren.

CHAPTER II

AN UNDERGROUND CELL AT FORT WARREN

THE floor of the room was of cold stone. The furnishings were an iron bunk, a chair and a table. The prisoner's first meal consisted of beef and sixteen ounces of bread served in a pan. The eating utensils were an old knife and fork. Other food, Mr. Stephens was told, might be purchased from the sutler. The price, however, seemed prohibitively high to a man cut off from all communication with the outside world and imprisoned for an indefinite term. For a pound of coffee he paid eighty cents, seventy-five for a can of condensed milk, twenty-five for a pound of brown sugar, a dollar for a pound of white sugar, two dollars for a pound of tea, and one dollar for a can of tomatoes. Yet it was clear that he could not live long in solitary confinement, from which respite came but once a day when he was permitted to walk under guard and to speak to no other prisoner.

Three days after reaching Fort Warren, Mr. Stephens wrote to General Dix, telling of his brother's illness and of the families in Georgia who were dependent on him and asking to be allowed to write and to receive letters. He did not, however, mention his illness as an extenuating circumstance or that he was even then threatened with a recurrence of the nephritic calculi that had so often tortured him. He was granted permission to communicate with his home on matters of private business—the letters, of course, first to be censored.

There were times when the melancholy to which he had been subject even under favorable conditions almost over-

whelmed him. There were others when, wracked by paroxysms of pain, he could not summon help from the soldier who was detailed to look after him. Though solitary in his cell, he was always exposed to the curious glances of visitors who wandered about the fort and eagerly peered through his window upon the man who had so long figured in the politics of the country and concerning whom there was still much in the papers. Finally, he asked a soldier to purchase for him a screen so that he might be able to take his daily bath protected from public scrutiny. He was permitted to buy books and a tablet, upon the pages of which he could pour forth his thoughts in diary form. Hour on end he read until his eyes were weary, wrote until his hand, maimed from the only physical encounter of his adulthood, was numbed and cramped. Then he would sit, gazing into space and dreaming of other days that loomed happier in retrospect than they had been in actuality.

His nights were filled with homely visions of the people he loved. He was back at Liberty Hall. Linton's little girl Becky ran in, calling merrily that the Yankees had come. Neither he nor Becky was afraid. The Yankees were powerless to hurt him, surrounded as he was by the dear familiar scenes. Then he would wake to the devastating reality of his cell at Fort Warren.

Again he was in Atlanta, about to return home. Pierce, a negro who had served him loyally, was at his side, declaring that he would remain always. With Pierce was a puppy whose naughty antics disturbed the negro. "Let him alone," the master directed. "The dog knows no better." Among dogs and his negroes, Alexander Stephens was safe and utterly content. Both knew and understood him.

Once he dreamed that he was at the Old Homestead where he had been born. The fields were ripe with corn. The stalks were large, each bearing many ears. The negroes clustered about while he talked of the new condition that

had come to them, while he gave instructions concerning their responsibilities, and told them how they should bring up their children. His servant Bob had prepared a sumptuous dinner.

Sometimes he was visiting his friend Richard Johnston; sometimes he was with his sister Catherine, who had been dead these many years, his little niece Mollie, now grown, sitting on his knee. Again he was journeying in a coach, conscious that he was still a prisoner but unafraid because Linton was with him. For a moment he was about to chide his brother for the long delay in coming to him. Then happiness wiped the thought from his mind. In sleep he was continually compensating for the loneliness, the physical suffering and the mental anguish of his long waking hours.

The daily papers he was allowed to see added to his distress. He read with sorrow that Jefferson Davis had been placed in irons and uttered the wish that the President's trial might be speedy and fair. "Widely as I differed with him before and after secession," he wrote in his diary, "ruinous to our cause as I thought his aims and objects, much as I attribute the condition of our country to his errors, yet I do now most deeply pity and commiserate his condition."

Later when he read that Davis was reported as having spoken from his cell in denunciatory terms of Stephens and R. M. T. Hunter, he discounted the story as a fabrication. As he read the conflicting estimates of the former President, he wrote in his diary, "Mr. Davis is neither the greatest nor the worst man in the United States or in the late Confederate States." And again: "He is a man of good character, well educated, and of more than fair ability, and of agreeable manner, but, in my judgment, far from being a statesman."

An editorial in *The New York Times* entitled "The Doom of Treason," demanded the trial of Davis, Alexander

Stephens, Breckinridge, Howell Cobb, Judah P. Benjamin, and others. "And when tried," the writer concluded, "if lawfully convicted, the President of the United States will determine whether their execution or banishment will best comport with the nature of their crime." Execution or banishment! The alternatives were not cheering. Alexander Stephens told himself that of the two he preferred the former.

Early in June he heard the rumor that Toombs, after evading arrest, had committed suicide. He did not believe it, however, for Robert Toombs was not the man to give up the fight without a last gallant struggle.

In the long hours that he spent alone, the prisoner traced again and again the course along which he had traveled from his semi-invalided childhood through the terrible years of civil war. Always he had struggled. Always achievement had been alloyed with disappointment. His health had caused him to put the thought of marriage and children out of his mind. Yet his life had been full and interesting. Since 1836—the date of his entrance into the legislature of his state—he had had a part in every great crisis through which the country had passed. He had written the platforms of national political parties; he had been directly responsible for the election and for the defeat of presidential candidates; he had broken the back-bone of the Mexican War; it was according to his plan that the great state of Texas had been admitted; as a member of Congress he had stood in the limelight during all the battles the question of slavery had caused; he had helped to bring about the compromises which had for a time quieted the country; to the utmost of his ability he had tried to avert secession; then, having cast his lot with his people who had rushed blindly into error, he had accepted the vice-presidency of the Confederate States only to find himself battling ineffectually against policies that he could not approve. Now

at the end of it all, there was no future toward which he could look. Alexander Hamilton Stephens a prisoner in an underground cell!

On the twentieth of June he read that the letter he had written some time before to President Johnson, asking for relief, had been referred to Secretary Seward. Because he was certain that from Seward there was no hope of clemency, he was sunk further into despair. Four days later it was said that Johnson intended to issue no other pardons to leaders of the late rebellion.

Constantly Stephens saw himself misquoted in the press. Speeches that he had never made were attributed to him in *The Rebellion Record*. Again he wrote to the President, once more summarizing the fight he had made to preserve the Union and urging that attention be given his request for a statement of the charges against him. On July twenty-fifth he wrote to Secretary Seward, again signifying his willingness to accept the issues of the war and to take the oath of amnesty.

The discomforts of imprisonment were undermining his small store of resistance. He had become so weak that, when the guard came to take him for his hour in the open air, he could walk only a few steps at a time. Flies and bedbugs deprived him of sleep. It was Seaverns, the surgeon at the fort, who finally interceded in his behalf and got through the order that released Alexander Stephens from close confinement and allowed him to walk at pleasure between sunrise and sunset, to see his family and friends, and to converse with officers and others at the fort. On July twenty-ninth Seaverns read the order to the prisoner. Mr. Stephens burst into tears. The surgeon had the delicacy to retire. Soon Lieutenant Newton entered with a duplicate order in his hands and smilingly took the lock from the door. "Jean Valjean," Alexander Stephens wrote in his diary, "could not have experienced greater relief when the

lid of his coffin was lifted and he was saved from being buried alive." Then he scribbled the good news to Linton. Now surely his brother would come to him!

In so far as orders would permit, the men at the fort had tried to ameliorate the suffering of the kindly little man who had been placed in their charge. Corporal Geary, detailed to attend to the prisoner's physical wants, soon replaced his perfunctory attitude with one of real solicitude for the comfort of his charge. Lieutenant Woodman, in command of the fort when Stephens was committed, and Lieutenant Newton, whose régime began toward the end of July, were courteous and friendly in all their relations to this strangest of prisoners and endeavored to obtain modifications of the strict orders that had been issued to them. When the bottle of whisky that had been tucked into his bag by the thoughtful Harry, who knew that his master in illness needed a stimulant, and the other presented by a friend in Atlanta were almost gone, Lieutenant Woodman gave him a bottle of gin.

One day Major Appleton brought the prisoner a book entitled *The Cavalier Dismounted*, in which an attempt was made to show that the aristocracy of the South had been overturned. "What do you think of it?" the Major asked later. Alexander Stephens replied with a whimsical smile. "It reminds me of a story I heard long ago," he said. "Artemus Ward, upon being introduced to Brigham Young, remarked, 'I believe, sir, you are a married man.' 'Pretty much,' said the celebrated Brigham. So I should say that the author is right—the cavalier is pretty much dismounted."

"As I returned from my walk," Mr. Stephens wrote in his diary on July twenty-second, "a little girl handed me a bunch of flowers. They were sweet and pretty. I have them in a tumbler of water on my table." Later he found that the child was Annie Seaverns, the daughter of the surgeon. As time went on, other children and several

of the ladies of the fort kept his cell bright with flowers, and, after the close confinement was lifted, talked with him frequently. That genius for friendship, which had endeared the little man to the people of Georgia, served him in good stead on the coast of New England.

Then, too, he could always find temporary solace in his memory of other days. Constantly he was bolstering his self-respect by recording in his diary petty victories he had won. When he saw in the *Boston Herald* of June sixteenth that James Johnson had been made provisional governor of Georgia, it did him good to recall that at college he had contested the highest honors with Johnson and had won. On July twenty-second he remembered that thirty-one years before he had been admitted to the bar of Georgia. Somewhat boastingly he recorded that, although he had read law only six weeks and entirely unassisted, he had so thoroughly mastered the authorities as to answer all questions to the complete satisfaction of the examiners who had complimented him in ordering his admission to the bar. On July twenty-seventh he recalled that thirty years before he had left his uncle's home to attend school in Washington, Georgia, and that twenty-two years before he had started upon his first canvass for a seat in the national House of Representatives. Rather self-righteously he jotted down the rules that had governed his legal career. Never, he said proudly, had he appeared in prosecution of a person who was not condemned, and no client of his, black or white, was ever hanged. All unfavorable decisions in his criminal cases had later been reversed by the superior court and had resulted either in acquittal or in reduction of the offense to manslaughter, which he had urged as the right finding. Indeed, his record was of the sort to bring comfort.

"Why I should suffer thus I do not know," he wrote plaintively. He had done only what he thought to be right. He had been guided always by the dictates of his conscience. He

had worked hard and against difficulty all his life. Had he not educated between thirty and forty young men who would otherwise have faced life handicapped by lack of adequate equipment? In his reading of the Bible, he turned oftenest to the Book of Job. Here was a man who had also suffered for his goodness as Alexander Stephens was now suffering. The comparison was not without its comforting aspects. Self-pitying though he had become, he would not curse God and die.

Yet he gloried in remembering his triumph over the preachers of Georgia that had taken place many years before. He had defended a man by the name of Reese accused of a murder committed in a house of ill-fame. Because of the circumstances, the preachers had been against Reese's having a fair trial. The jury had pronounced the man guilty. The case had been reversed, however, by the Supreme Court. "The judge and the jurors," Stephens wrote reminiscently in his diary, "as well as the whole tribe of Javerts, were scandalized at the escape of their victim. May heaven deliver me from a jury of preachers! . . . They are too impressed with the idea that they are God's vice-regents here below." Yes, comfort was always to be found in thoughts of former prowess!

Over and over he reviewed his long conflict with President Davis, justifying his stand against the centralization of government, against the suspension of *habeas corpus*, against conscription, martial law, impressment. His mind ran constantly upon his suggested policies that concerned the finances, the parole of federal prisoners and the campaign he had proposed for a peaceful settlement of the difficulties. More and more convinced he was that the outcome would have been reversed if the government had taken the advice that had been given by Alexander Stephens. Davis not only failed to understand the popular aims and objects of the South but permitted the natural resources of the Con-

federate States to be wasted. Besides, he did not comprehend the true meaning of constitutional liberty.

When Stephens was not pondering upon the events of the past, reading the books he ordered from Boston or secured through the library at the fort, concocting plans for the reconstruction of the country, or writing to Linton, he was assailed in his loneliness by recurrent belief in the superstitions of his childhood. Premonitions of good or evil elated or distressed him. He found himself relying strangely upon his dreams. When he saw a new moon over his shoulder, he was greatly cheered. Though he declared that some superstitions existed in all men, he added, "I do not think I am at all superstitious." Yet when all the Stephenses of Georgia had met for a reunion shortly before his arrest, he had been sure that the happy occasion was ominous of disaster.

His loneliness concentrated, moreover, in an overwhelming desire to see Linton, for whom his affection was more fatherly than fraternal. Much older than his half-brother, he had been the boy's guardian, had sent him through the University of Georgia and for his legal training to the University of Virginia and to Harvard. Though in the early days Aleck had been the mentor and the provider, he had always leaned far more upon Linton than Linton upon him. Here was some one to love and advise, some one who needed him, some one to whom he could write long, counseling, affectionate letters, some one to take the place of wife and children. He was conscious of having shaped Linton's thinking so that the minds of the two brothers were always in unison. When he read his speeches to Linton or discussed with him some policy of government, it was as though he were conferring with another self. Oh, if he could only hear from Linton, could know that Linton was well! he sighed into the pages of his diary. Captain Saint had not permitted him to post the letter he had written before leaving Craw-

fordville. Then news had come three days later that Linton was ill.

The first letter from Georgia arrived on June ninth. Then Joe Myers wrote, obviously in fear of censorship. On July eighth, almost two months after his arrest, came a letter from Linton. The envelope was worn and dog-eared. The postmark was dated May twenty-fourth. Though infinitely relieved, the prisoner was more than ever desolated by loneliness. After that, letters came from time to time. Strange it was that he should dream once that Linton was dead! He remembered well the day he had been told of Linton's birth. Another half-brother added to the burdens of his childhood! Nevertheless, resentment had not lasted. Almost at once he had loved this small brother, who later became his ward.

On August nineteenth, in response to a request from Doctor Monroe, the surgeon who had replaced Doctor Seaverns at the fort, President Johnson issued orders for Alexander Stephens to be given more comfortable quarters. The prisoner, with Corporal Geary, was forthwith assigned a suite of three rooms. It was as though he had moved from a cell to a palace, Stephens recorded happily in his diary. If Linton would only come to him, now that he was no longer doomed to solitude, he felt that he could endure indefinite imprisonment. Each day he watched for the boat, hoping that Linton would be aboard. He dreamed that he saw his brother approaching the door. Then he read in the papers that Linton and Governor Joseph E. Brown were in Washington, seeking with the President an interview in behalf of Alexander Stephens; then that they had secured the interview, which had proved unavailing. One rainy night he dreamed of Linton and was terrified. "To dream of the dead," he wrote, "is said to be a sign of rain." Perhaps some ill fortune had befallen his brother. It was possible that the converse of the adage might also be true: to

dream of some one during a rain might mean that the person was dead.

On September first Linton arrived, bringing with him Herschel V. Johnson, of Georgia, defeated candidate for the vice-presidency of the United States on the Douglas ticket. He bore no news that concerned probable release. Nothing mattered, however, for Linton had come. Some one who loved Alexander Stephens was at hand. The brothers talked together by the hour. Linton wept as he read the prison journal. There was a strong arm to lean upon during those walks about the fort. Other friends came from Georgia and elsewhere to see Stephens in his exile, but Linton lingered.

An importuning letter was dispatched to President Johnson and another to General Grant, asking for help. Alexander Stephens had hope that Grant would intercede in his behalf. In 1865, when he was waiting to confer with President Lincoln, he had met the General at City Point. While Stephens awaited permission to proceed to Washington, which was later denied, between Grant and him something approaching real friendship had been consummated. When he had read on July thirty-first of Grant's reception at Faneuil Hall, he had written in his diary: "General Grant is a remarkable man and, if he lives and continues in good health, will figure largely in the future history of this country. I consider him one of the most remarkable men I ever saw."

At once there came a reply, the first of an official nature that Stephens had received since his arrest. It was signed by General Comstock. "Lieutenant-general Grant," it said, "desires me to say in reply to your note of September 16th that he has already spoken once or twice to the President in reference to your case and will do so again."

There can be little doubt that General Grant was instrumental in securing the orders for Stephens's parole, which

came ten days after the arrival of the letter from headquarters.

Among the Boston sympathizers who had been sending little luxuries to the distinguished prisoner was a Mrs. Salter, who, it seems, had met Linton but whom Alexander Stephens did not know. A few days after Linton's arrival, she called at Fort Warren, accompanied by her two daughters—Edith, a child, and Mary, a young lady of seventeen or thereabouts. The little girl played about the fort, while Mrs. Salter, Mary, the prisoner and Linton talked together in Mr. Stephens's apartment. The guests were charming, the host decided. Miss Mary was a young lady of beauty and of unusual intelligence. After their departure, he realized that Linton quite agreed with him. Then he remembered that Linton had been a widower for eight years, caring for his three little girls with the assistance of servants. Linton's marriage thirteen years before, which his brother had had to admit was entirely suitable, had been a blow to Alexander Stephens. Until he had adjusted himself to sharing Linton with some one else, he had been more than usually melancholy. Contemplation of Linton's possible second marriage did not bring happiness to Alexander Stephens. The Salters made another trip to Fort Warren, and Linton found excuses for visits to Boston. Aleck had learned to trust his sixth sense. He had a hunch that could not be lightly cast aside.

At four o'clock October thirteenth the Stephens brothers, with Judge Reagan, the order for whose release had come simultaneously with that paroling the former Vice-President of the Confederacy, stepped aboard the *William Shand* on the first lap of their journey homeward. The prison experience was at an end.

There followed a day at the Revere House in Boston, another at the home of George W. Pierce, a wealthy relative of the former President, Franklin Pierce, a stop at the Astor

House in New York, a call upon President Johnson in Washington, and then a journey through the country that had been laid waste by the ravages of war.

Alexander Stephens was optimistic concerning the future of the South. He had faith in the President, faith in General Grant. The South must now accept the issues of war and unite with northern leaders in the task of restoration and reconstruction. In his brief interview with the President, Mr. Stephens gave some unsolicited advice that was politely received. He had dwelt chiefly on the problem presented by the emancipated negroes. He suggested that the blacks be organized in guilds, corporations or tribes, that would be represented in the lawmaking bodies. The states should be districted, and the blacks should vote separately from the whites. The suffrage should be limited, standards of eligibility to the franchise, however, to be within the reach of ambitious and self-respecting negroes. In this way there would be no mingling of the races on the hustings, while the rights and interests of both would be safeguarded. Provisions for the education of the negro should be made at once, with school attendance compulsory. Though the President listened willingly to the exposition of the plan, Mr. Stephens gathered that he favored moving the negroes as the Indians had been moved. Despite the many knots in the problem, Mr. Stephens returned to Georgia hopeful as to the ultimate unraveling.

The faithful Harry met the home-coming train. The people of Crawfordville were effusive in their greetings. At Liberty Hall the negroes wept for joy. There was, however, one dominant note of sadness, for Sir Bingo Binks, the dog that Alexander Stephens had loved, had passed on to whatever reward there is for canine devotion.

CHAPTER III

MINGLED SEED

AMONG the Jacobite adventurers who fought in behalf of Charles Stuart, the Young Pretender, was a lad who bore the name of Alexander Stephens—a lad who loved warfare and excelled therein. After the decisive battle of Culloden Moor, he took refuge in Pennsylvania among the Shawnee Indians. There he married Catherine Baskins, the daughter of a well-to-do gentleman who disinherited the girl because she permitted herself to be swayed by romance and not by her father's sound advice. Alexander distinguished himself in the French and Indian Wars, fighting under a young colonel by the name of Washington, and later won a captaincy in the Revolutionary War. In 1784, when he settled on Kettle Creek in Georgia, he found farming wholly uncongenial to a gentleman of outstanding martial ability.

Accordingly, a son Andrew was early forced to assume a share of the family's support. By way of evading filial responsibilities, Alexander's son James returned to Pennsylvania, and another son Nehemiah set out for Tennessee. Andrew, a studious, industrious and rather oppressively pious young man, applied himself to the professions of teaching and farming. His good sense led him to marry a woman of intelligence. Indeed, Margaret Grier, who became his wife, had various collateral claims to distinction. Her brother Aaron had been an Indian fighter of note; her brother Robert—founder of *Grier's Almanac*, once a household necessity in Georgia—achieved a seat on the bench of the national Supreme Court. Unfortunately, however, Margaret died in 1812 at the birth of a delicate baby, who—

deprived of her maternal ministrations—was left to struggle through a puny infancy and childhood. With three children to rear, the sensible Andrew married again as soon as decency and opportunity permitted. Because other babies followed in rapid succession, little Aleck was forced to shift not only for himself but also for the younger brothers and sisters.

Aleck must have heard many a story of the Cherokee and Creek Indians who inhabited North Georgia. How the Creeks won their title to the northern part of Georgia was surely talked of around the hearth-fire of the Stephenses. At first the warlike Creeks had been the undisputed tenants, ruling the country according to their own laws. Then the Cherokees began to make encroachments upon them. Finally the Creeks proposed a gage of battle. The milder mannered Cherokees refused to fight and substituted a challenge to a ball game that would decide the issue. During three long days picked warriors from both tribes contested upon the ball field. By a Cherokee victory North Georgia was lost to the Creeks. Like their predecessors, the victorious Indians ruled themselves quite apart from the white men of the South. Now and then wandering tribesmen were seen in Taliaferro County. Now and then came accounts of Indian outrages—often enough to frighten the timid little boy and make him dread lonely and dark places.

Aleck knew he was different from other children. The realization made him lonely and unhappy. Over and over he had heard neighbors say that it was miraculous that he had lived at all, frail as he had always been. He knew, too, that no one believed he would reach manhood. That, of course, was why it was not important for him to attend school regularly. Education was thought to be preparation for life. To Aleck, however, it was more than that—

it was a process altogether pleasant in itself. At his father's school he learned a great deal whenever he was allowed to attend. In bad weather, however, he was kept at home and given the simple chores that were not considered too difficult for a small invalid. He helped his stepmother with the cooking. He brought in wood for her fires. He dressed and fed the younger children and watched over them at their play, all the while envying his older brother who trudged to school each morning with his pedagogical father. One accepted being different, but one was lonely nevertheless. When there are no playmates, a boy does a great deal of thinking all by himself. He learned to associate places with his thoughts and to love the trees and brooks and fence corners that shared his loneliness. On the hillside above the spring Aleck would lie on pleasant days when Ma did not need him and gaze toward the flying clouds. Then he would think of the mother he had never seen and wonder if she were somewhere above the sky, watching over him and understanding how much he wanted her.

His father and stepmother were not unkind, but they were always busy—the one with his teaching and reading and his half-hearted supervision of the farm, and the other with her never-ending household duties. The Stephenses were on agreeable but not intimate terms with their neighbors. The farm folk did their visiting chiefly on Sundays—a custom that Andrew Stephens did not approve, for he believed that the Sabbath was a day that should be devoted to Bible reading. So, whenever the neighbors did drop in for a social chat, Aleck's father read to them from the Scriptures, thus both hastening their departure and discouraging other visits.

Much worse than loneliness, however, were the fears that constantly assailed the sick little boy. The world was full of terrors. He was afraid of big boys who played games in which he was apt to be hurt. He was afraid of his

stepmother's scoldings, of his father's frown, of thunderstorms, of the dark, afraid that something would happen to the younger children, and afraid of the big unknown that pressed in upon him. Because he knew so much about pain, he dreaded to see any living creature hurt. He was always finding birdlings that had fallen from nests, lame dogs, starving cats, any suffering thing that needed nursing. His stepmother knew that the babies were safe in his care. So perhaps Aleck was sometimes kept at home when he was well enough to go to school.

It was Aleck's duty to tend the sheep. Aaron, when not at school, was assigned more difficult tasks. While Aleck could not be expected to plow and hoe, he could certainly walk to the pastures, see that the sheep did not wander far afield, and bring them home at night. In summer he found the work no hardship. He liked to be out-of-doors—to lie in the sun and dream. He liked, too, to feel that the woolly creatures looked to him for protection. In the winter, however, it was frequently long past dark when he returned home. Then he was afraid. One evening as he was nearing the house, he discovered that a ewe had strayed away from the flock. It was cold and inky dark. At home there was a fire, and there was safety. He wanted to find the ewe, of course. First, however, he would go in and warm his hands. As usual his father sat reading by the flickering light of the lamp. The food that his stepmother was cooking smelled savory good. He would not go out again until supper was over. Perhaps his father would offer to accompany him or would send Aaron. After the meal, however, Andrew Stephens returned to his book, and Aaron began to study. Aleck was sure that he would have to go alone in search of the ewe if he mentioned that she was missing. He could hear the wind sighing through the trees. Outside the night was ghastly in its darkness. Shivering with fear, the little

boy crouched before the fire. He could not tell his father. In the morning he would find the ewe.

He did find her at last. In the night she had given birth to a lamb. The ewe and the lamb were both dead. Aleck wept in conscience-stricken anguish. He had been the cause of suffering and of death. He could understand the suffering. He felt that he would like also to experience the death. He could bear the thrashing his father gave him, but he could scarcely bear the grief. If he had not been afraid, there would have been no tragedy. Somehow, somehow fear must be overcome. At least he must never give in to it again, for fear that developed cowardice brought suffering to others and to oneself. A boy must not be afraid to do what he knows is right.

It was the first of July, 1823. The sun was hot in the open field. It had baked the sterile clay upon the Homestead into solid blocks. As usual, the crops were poor and inadequately worked. Yet Aleck was hoeing diligently, trying to forget his aching back and the terrible dizziness that came upon him whenever he leaned over. What with his stepmother ill and his father reading and teaching, he was now considered old enough to help with the harder work about the place, though no one could say that Aleck had grown strong with the passing years. Nevertheless, it was necessary for an eleven-year-old boy to make himself as useful as possible. A neighbor came out of the house and crossed toward the place where Aleck was working, bearing unwelcome news. Another baby had been born. It was a boy, the neighbor said, and he was to be called Linton. Aleck listened without comment. There was really nothing for him to say under the circumstances. Another baby meant that he would have a great deal more work to do, that his stepmother would be busier and wearier than ever. Mechanically the lad continued his hoeing. He loved the

other children. He rather hoped he would not love this little Linton.

Later he returned to the house and stole timidly into the room where his stepmother lay. By her side was a tiny squirming object—Linton Stephens, his half-brother. There was a lump in Aleck's throat, a mist before his eyes. Poor little baby! Life would probably be hard for him, too. Aleck felt sadder than he had ever felt before. Just as he had feared, he loved this baby and wanted desperately to shield it from hardships. It was as though he was adopting little Linton Stephens for his own.

Aleck Stephens was fourteen. He knew, to his chagrin, that he looked much younger. Why he did not grow like other boys in stature and in strength he did not know. Though he had been busy always, he had not done the sort of work that would stunt a boy's growth. He envied children who could play. Yet he had little desire to enter into their games; his strength was not enough for the things that had to be done. Now that his father and mother lay ill, Aleck was filled with an overpowering sense of his youthful inadequacy. He felt both unable to bear the grief and to shoulder the responsibility that should be assumed by a boy of fourteen.

When news came on that seventh day of May, 1826, that his father was dead, in his anguish Aleck thought that he wanted to die also. He loved the taciturn, studious, strait-laced Andrew Stephens with a boyish idolatry destined to increase with the years. Was life always to be like this—full of suffering, death and sorrow?

A few nights later he heard the unearthly screams of a bird piercing the stillness. He thought that the sound came from a raven perched outside upon the limbs of the mulberry tree. The old negro Ben, however, said that no living bird emitted those horrible sounds. At any rate, such cries were

signs of death. Though Aleck closed his ears with his fingers and would not listen to anything else Ben had to say, he believed that the negro spoke the truth. His stepmother, ill with the same malarial fever that had caused the death of his father, would not live. Therefore, he had tried to steel himself against the second catastrophe of the week. On May fourteenth his stepmother died.

When the Homestead was sold, it was found that each child's share amounted to but four hundred and forty-four dollars. Aleck and Aaron went to live with their Uncle Aaron Grier, and the younger children were taken by their mother's relatives.

The following summer Aleck entered the school at Locust Grove established by the Catholics and presided over by a Mr. O'Cavanaugh, who stolidly held to the accent of his native land and to a belief in the efficacy of the switch he kept constantly in hand. Sitting before O'Cavanaugh's massive hulk, Aleck felt very small and inconsequential. Whenever the great voice boomed through the schoolroom and the switch descended upon the desk or upon the shoulders of some offending pupil, he would scringe in terror. Yet it was good to be in school regularly. He liked to study and applied himself diligently to his work. He was frightened, however, not only by O'Cavanaugh but also by the great lumbering boys who were thought to need the harsh discipline administered by the mighty Irishman. Never had little Aleck Stephens been so utterly miserable. Never had he hated so genuinely the weakling he knew himself to be. He must not let himself be afraid. Some day he must be a man. Surely the time had come to make a start in the right direction.

"Spelling," thundered O'Cavanaugh.

Aleck took his place in the row of pupils. The first word would come to him. He told himself that he had nothing

to fear, for he knew how to spell every word on the list.

"Ah-raw-bia," said O'Cavanaugh, fixing Aleck with his steely Irish eyes.

Aleck hesitated. There was no such word in the lesson. Arabia was the first, but that was not what Mr. O'Cavanaugh had said. Perhaps Aleck had taken the wrong assignment.

"I can't spell it," he faltered.

O'Cavanaugh was apoplectic in his rage.

"You can't spell it!" he roared. "You confounded little rascal! You tell me you can't spell it. Spell it, sir! Ah-raw-bia!"

Blood surged toward Aleck's head. He was not afraid of O'Cavanaugh. He was afraid of nothing on earth. He was merely murderously angry.

"I know all the words on that list," he said defiantly. "I can spell any one of them if it is pronounced right. I don't understand your pronunciation. And, sir, you shall not speak to me that way!"

The little fellow was standing very straight. His head was thrown back. His dark deep-set eyes were flashing. He saw the switch quivering in O'Cavanaugh's hand. He saw it lifted for a second. He knew that it might descend upon his shoulders. Yet he was not afraid. Proudly he was certain that O'Cavanaugh knew that he was not afraid.

"Sir," he repeated evenly, "you shall not speak to me like that!"

Then he glanced through the doorway upon the stones that filled the schoolyard. If O'Cavanaugh struck him, he was determined to pick up one of those stones and hurl it with all his might in the teacher's direction. O'Cavanaugh glared furiously. Aleck met his eyes without flinching.

"Next," said O'Cavanaugh, passing the word to another pupil.

After school the older boys clustered around little Aleck Stephens. He was a hero in their eyes. In his own estimation he was a hero also. From that day he and O'Cavanaugh were the best of friends. Aleck had learned an important lesson: the little fellow could command respect by standing up for his rights. In the future, no matter how frightened he happened to be, he would not be bullied by a person of superior size. Strength of brain could be made to compensate for weakness of body. He would make his own way in the world, demanding the respect that he believed to be his due.

Aaron Grier, being a God-fearing man intent upon performing his duty as he saw it, sent his small ward to Sabbath-school. There Aleck began to shine. If he could not beat a big boy in a fight, he could certainly show how fast he could learn, whether it was spelling, arithmetic, or verses from the Bible. Mr. Charles C. Mills, a devout gentleman who attached a great deal of importance to the Scriptures, listened to young Stephens's recitations with amazed appreciation. Here was a lad worth watching. Queer little specimen he was, too, with his large eager eyes, his enormous head, covered with waving brown hair, and his poor shriveled body. Aleck expanded under the pleasing patronage. Never before in his cramped little life had he been singled out for special attention. He did have a brain. He had suspected its existence a long time. Now he was sure. So with increased concentration he devoted himself to studying the Bible. He liked the large words that rolled glibly from the tip of his small tongue. It was fun to say them over and over, verse after verse. It warmed him from the top of his disheveled head to the soles of his feet to see the amazement on the faces of those who listened. Aleck had never had such a delightful time. At last he stood in the center of a charmed circle. At last he had learned that there was a way to overcome the disabilities of his body. He

would study and study and study until the world was forced to recognize him.

Would Aleck like to go to the Academy at Washington, Georgia? inquired the benevolent Mr. Mills. Aleck said that he would, of course, that he wanted to learn all there was to be found within the covers of books. Then Mr. Mills agreed to make the arrangements. He wanted to use his money for the promotion of the kingdom, and he was sure that young Aleck Stephens would prove a good investment. Aleck thanked him and said that he would talk the matter over with his uncle and aunt.

The upshot was that the boy soon found himself in Washington, living at the home of the Reverend Alexander Hamilton Webster. Aleck was thrilled by the coincidence of the names. The Reverend Mr. Webster gave him a book out of which he was to study. On the fly-leaf Aleck saw the name written in a bold clear hand—Alexander Hamilton Webster. Beneath it he wrote, as firmly as he could, Alexander Hamilton Stephens. The imposing name suited his hopes and aspirations. The boy studied with earnest assiduity. Though a weakling in body, he would become a giant in mind.

Vaguely Aleck knew that there was a plan on foot to educate him for the Presbyterian ministry. The idea somewhat pleased him, though he was frankly doubtful of his qualifications for the high calling. No one actually discussed the matter with him. It was rather taken for granted that a lad so proficient in Bible study would have no objection to wearing the cloth. The death of the Reverend Mr. Webster, which took place not long after Aleck entered the Academy, did not interrupt the boy's studies, for other worthy citizens were anxious to contribute to the Lord's work by boarding a future expounder of the Gospel.

In June, 1828, Alexander Stephens was pronounced ready to enter the University at Athens—then known as Franklin

College. He had attended the Academy but ten months and during that time had taken a vacation of six weeks. At last Aleck knew that his mind was compensating for the deficiencies of his body.

In his sophomore year at the University Alexander Stephens was assailed by doubts. Here he was—a beneficiary of the Presbyterian Board—not only rejecting many of the tenets of the faith but also certain that no call to the ministry had come to him. The introspective lad was thrown into the depths of the old melancholy from which he had suffered as a lonely boy on the farm. Of one thing, however, he was certain: he wanted an education and by dint of personal effort must achieve it. If it were not for the nagging of those distressing doubts, he could have been utterly happy at college. Like Bacon, he longed to take all knowledge as his province. Since the entrance examinations when he had had the stroke of luck to be given to read the only part of Cicero's Orations with which he was familiar, he had met with no scholastic difficulties. He knew that he was expanding under the encouragement of the professors and in congenial association with kindred minds. Yet daily he was becoming more convinced that he could not be a minister honestly and that he would not be a dishonest member of any profession.

During vacation he discussed the problem with his uncle. Aaron Grier was loath to give advice. His wife, however, argued on Aleck's side. The boy should be free to make his choice later, unhampered by further obligations. Finally Uncle Aaron turned over to Aleck the corpus of the small patrimony Andrew Stephens had left his children. With this Aleck could continue his education without accepting assistance. He made some sort of explanation to the board and promised as soon as possible to return the money that had been advanced.

The young men on the campus at Athens were not a par-

ticularly serious lot. Their strange sense of humor must have caused the professors many an uncomfortable moment. There was Doctor Lehman, of German origin, who used to drill the students in Greek and listen to the merriment his English pronunciation occasioned. There was old man Hopkins, who wore a long queue of silvery whiteness. One day the boys caught a pig and arranged the creature's tail so as to present a very close resemblance to that queue. They slipped the mangy pig into the classroom. He walked about the room, shaking the queue with each grunt, while the students roared and the professor attempted to emulate the philosophic Stoics.

Professor Shannan, who used to warm into enthusiasm when he unfolded the beauties of Cicero's *De Oratore*, was fond of fiddling but was thrown into fits whenever he heard a boy whistle. One day a fellow sauntered along the passage whistling. Shannan slammed his book upon the desk and made for the door. The fellow, hearing him, bolted down the hall, Shannan after him. The Professor returned without having overtaken the culprit and vented his wrath upon the class who had dared to be amused by his anger. Later some silly fellow came to the door and bleated like a goat. Shannon was on his feet in a twinkling. Unfortunately, the key being on the outside, the boy gave it a turn and stood laughing at the Professor's fury.

Though Aleck enjoyed the fun, he applied himself to learning.

The summer of 1832. Alexander Stephens had graduated from the University. Supposedly he was ready for LIFE. Four years in academic halls were thought to give the necessary preparation. Now, however, that the routine of college work was lifted, he was unhappy again. The melancholy of his baffled childhood had returned with devastating force. He felt like a sailor whose ship and com-

panions had left him at mid-ocean. There had been tasks aboard that had been both familiar and pleasant. Now that he had been thrown upon an unsafe and uncharted sea, the old timidity had come again.

Aleck looked back upon the last four years longingly. The recognition that he had always craved had come to him. He had been graduated two points ahead of James Johnson and William Crawford, son of the nominee for the presidency of the United States. Since no separate honors were assigned, however, Stephens, Johnson and Crawford had delivered the three commencement orations. It had all been very gratifying. He had liked standing before the crowd of people at commencement and delivering the speech he had so carefully prepared. Now it was all over. Aleck had aspirations without plans for their attainment. He had spent his patrimony and was in debt.

Already there were criticisms from the Presbyterian Board that had advanced the money for the two years at college. It was being said that young Stephens had accepted aid under false pretenses. The debt must be paid. Aleck appealed to his brother Aaron, who had become self-supporting. Yes, Aaron could lend him enough to pay the debt.

Already the law was beckoning to Alexander Stephens. It was out of the question, however, to contemplate further study. He had to earn as quickly as possible. So he accepted the only offer that came immediately. It was to teach school in Madison, Georgia.

Alexander Stephens was wretched. He was not fitted for the position of schoolmaster. The tedium of the work oppressed him. It was galling to realize that he had sunk into insignificance, that he was constantly associating with children and with adults whose minds were inferior to his. He, who had longed to forge ahead, had been caught in a trough. He had no patience with the stupidity with which

he was surrounded. His situation would have been more nearly bearable if there had been more recognition of his superiority. People beneath his intellectual level did not distress him so long as they gave him the adulation he desired. But children and children's parents did not think that Alexander Hamilton Stephens was a great man. He would never be a great man if he continued to live in Madison. Still, he worked conscientiously and filled his diary with his melancholy broodings.

At college his health had been better—or perhaps he had thought less about it. In Madison it grew distinctly worse—or perhaps he made it worse by constantly dwelling upon it. He was not cheered by the realization that he looked younger than many of his pupils. He was five feet seven inches, and, because of the shortness of his trunk, seemed not nearly so tall when he sat behind the teacher's desk. His face was round like a child's, with features that had gained nothing in maturity. There was a shrill girlish quality to his voice that he could not overcome. Nervous dyspepsia was added to his other discomforts. Days on end bread and milk constituted the only diet that he could digest. His head ached constantly, and weariness dragged upon his every nerve and muscle. Yet there is a tradition extant that the little schoolmaster, who had no thought of letting his infirmities be considered a handicap, once applied the switch to two boys much larger than he.

Then, too, he imagined that he had fallen in love. The girl, of course, was one of his pupils. He fought to drive the folly from his mind. A penniless invalid contemplating matrimony! The idea was preposterous. He resented its intrusion into the processes of his thinking. At college he had escaped the emotional entanglements that had diverted his fellow students from their work. As a devotee of Greek culture, he had assured himself that Platonic friendship would always prove satisfying to him. Mental activities

had forestalled bodily cravings and had exhausted the small store of his strength. Later, however, he had read a great deal of Burns and Byron and had begun to insert too many passionate quotations into his diary. He had come to believe in love in the abstract and was seeking concrete materialization. He did not realize that he had injected into his subconscious mind the thought that the male should permit sex to play a part in his development. He told himself that he was hopelessly in love. His pride prevented his telling the girl. Therefore he must leave Madison and never see her again. This he did.

Since teaching was the only vocation that seemed to offer immediate income, he became tutor for the children of Doctor LeConte and Mr. Varnadoe in Liberty County. He was sustained, however, by the determination to use teaching as a stop-gap between college and the law. Again he was definitely looking toward the future, certain that some day little Aleck Stephens would be a man of note—would be Alexander Hamilton Stephens whom the world would honor.

CHAPTER IV

THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS

IT WAS the last of May. The year was 1834. Aleck Stephens had come home. He was preparing to study law in the village of Crawfordville. Though his savings were small and though the adventure was hazardous, he was determined nevertheless.

One stroke of good fortune came at once. Mr. Swepston C. Jefferies, an attorney who was retiring, sold Aleck for the small sum of twenty-five dollars the books that were necessary: Starkie's *Evidence*, Maddox's *Chancery*, Comyn's *Digest*, Chitty's *Pleadings*, and a few other volumes to serve the young man's immediate uses. Then, too, the sheriff was entirely willing that Aleck should study before the desk in his office, which had formerly been used by Jefferies.

At work night and day, Aleck was far from happy. When he was not poring over books, he was indulging in introspection and in mental criticism of persons about him. His diary, as usual, supplied a safety-valve for his emotions. "I am too boyish, childish, trifling, simple in my manner and address," he wrote searchingly. In his unhappiness the people of the village grated upon his overwrought nerves. "I do detest vulgarity," he declared. "Sometimes I almost have a contempt for the whole human race—the whole appearing like a degenerate herd." Having denied the first call of sex that had come to him, he fell to criticizing other men who were not breathing the same sublimated atmosphere with which he had tried to surround himself. "Sensuality is the moving principle of mankind," he said

defensively, further complaining that the most brutish were the most honored. "Of all things to me an obscene fool is the most intolerable. Yet such I am compelled to mix with daily. . . . I long to be associated with the mind that soars above the infirmities of human nature." He could not have realized that he was contrasting himself with vigorous young men and coveting the pleasures that were denied him. So condemnation of his subconscious urges became his secret pastime, the more bitter because repressed in his relations with people. Witnessing the waltz for the first time on June twenty-fifth, he interpreted his emotion as one of disgust. All the while, however, in mental activities he was violently compensating for his physical deficiencies. His money could not last long. He must fit himself with all speed to earn a livelihood. Therefore, eight weeks after he began the study of law, he presented himself for admission to the Georgian bar.

Many of Aleck's boyhood friends gathered at the courthouse on that hot morning in July. There were lawyers from neighboring counties whose business had brought them to Crawfordville that day. The pale-faced youth took his place before the examiners. He was trying to assure himself that his preparation had been adequate. Chapter by chapter he had outlined the books he had studied. He believed that he could give from memory analyses of each subject treated by the various authors. Judge William H. Crawford presided over the examination. First came Judge Lumpkin's queries on Blackstone. Logically Aleck gave his answers. Judge Lumpkin turned to Judge Crawford. He had never heard a better examination, he said. William C. Dawson questioned the candidate on the statutes of the state, and Daniel C. Chandler questioned him on criminal law. Both complimented the young applicant upon his knowledge.

"Take an order for admission, Mr. Solicitor, and have

the oath administered," said Crawford. "I am satisfied."

Then the visiting lawyers and the people from the village crowded around Aleck, profuse in their congratulations. Quinea O'Neal, clerk of the inferior court, who had been helping the young applicant all he could, was elated beyond all power of restraint.

Aleck had caught a glimpse of one young lawyer whom for some reason he did not meet. Robert Toombs he was, from the adjoining county of Wilkes, who had been admitted to the bar several years before. During the rest of his life Aleck Stephens never entirely escaped from the spell cast that day by Robert Toombs. The virile young man was the sum of Aleck's hopeless longings. His every gesture denoted energy and power. Six feet tall was Robert Toombs. His fine head was set well upon a pair of broad shoulders. His hair was black and glossy; his teeth were brilliantly white; his eyes flashed dauntlessly; and his voice was thick, harsh and masculine. Aleck had heard that Bob Toombs drank too much, swore many a manly oath and had been recklessly unruly at college. In other words, he was all that Alexander Stephens was not. The little invalid admired the strong man for his very bravado. A few days later in Wilkes County he met Toombs. At once began the friendship which was to endure through the triumphs and vicissitudes of the coming years when the two men battled together in behalf of the South and then for a short time were separated by their divergent public policies to be reunited at the Montgomery convention.

Aleck was not deceived by his victory before the judges. He knew that the path he was blazing toward the far goal of his ambitions would be rocky. Rather defiantly he determined to remain in Crawfordville where he was known as "Little Aleck." He longed to be big in the eyes of his own small world, and paradoxically he loved the place where he had scarcely known a happy moment.

Yet little enough could be said in behalf of the village. Built in 1826 and named for the Honorable William H. Crawford, it was scarcely eight years old when Alexander Stephens decided to cast his lot with its people. Sixty-four miles from Augusta it was, and from Atlanta one hundred and seven miles. Yet near Crawfordville Alexander Stephens had been born, and here he was determined to become a prophet with honor among his own people.

When Jefferies proposed that Stephens practise with him in Columbus and guaranteed fifteen hundred dollars a year, "No," said Aleck, "I should prefer to stay in Crawfordville if I knew I could earn but a hundred dollars than to receive five thousand dollars a year anywhere else."

The handicap of his youthful appearance sometimes seemed more than he could bear. Constantly some jesting friend would relate to him stories that caused him to smile in public but sent him scurrying to his diary in order to express his galling mortification. One day he passed a shoe factory where three negroes were at work.

"Who dat lil' fella walk so fas' eb'ry mawnin'?" one asked another.

"Man, dat's a lawyer."

"Law! Lawyer, you say!" the negro replied mirthfully. "Dat lil' fella a lawyer! Ha, ha! Dat's too good."

There was nothing, of course, for Aleck to do but to laugh also when he heard the story, but tears would have suited his mood better.

Those were the days when lawyers rode the circuit from court to court, when counsels for the defendant and for the plaintiff stayed together at the inns. Therefore a horse was an indispensable part of legal equipment. Aleck had none, however, and was too proud to borrow from his friends in Crawfordville. Starting on the circuit, he walked to his uncle's home ten miles away, carrying a change of clothing in a saddle-bag. Aaron Grier lent his nephew a horse, and

Aleck set out again. Near Washington, Georgia, he dismounted, dressed in the shelter of a wooded place and arrived at his destination sufficiently presentable to appear in court.

On September tenth Aleck Stephens was employed as counsel in his first important case. The son of Isaac Battle had died, leaving a wife and little girl—Martha Ann. The widow had subsequently married one John Hilsman. Now both Isaac and the mother claimed the child. Aleck was employed by Hilsman to present the claims of the mother, while the veteran Jefferies represented the grandfather. That evening Aleck made an epochal entry into his diary—“This day I was employed by Mr. Hilsman with the conditional fee of twenty dollars.” In other words, if the case was not won, the young lawyer would probably receive no fee at all. Consequently, Aleck was on his mettle. Money and influence were on the side of the grandfather. Jefferies delivered an *argumentum ad hominem* directed toward Hilsman, who he said was intemperate and unworthy to assist in his stepdaughter’s upbringing. He extolled the virtues of Mr. Battle. Here were to be found all the conditions by which youth should be surrounded—uprightness of character, position in the community and wealth in addition. It looked as though Mrs. Hilsman’s case was lost.

When Alexander Stephens rose, the court-room was crowded, principally with the friends and kinspeople of the Battles. In high falsetto the young lawyer opened his case. As he proceeded, however, new timbre came into his voice. He was pleading not only for the rights of motherhood but for the future of Alexander Stephens. The audience listened in rapt silence. The judge blinked his judicial eyes. Tears streamed down the cheeks of the jurors. The child was given into the custody of her mother. “When that little fellow began to argue,” said a kinsman of the defeated grandfather, “that even among the wild beasts of the forest

the mother was by the great law of nature, the keeper of her offspring and would fight even to the death for their custody, and everybody fell to crying, I knew Isaac would have to give up Martha Ann."

That was the beginning. By the end of the year Alexander Stephens felt reasonably certain that he could make a success of the law if his frail body could endure the strain of circuit-riding in Georgia. The winter had been hard, however. The oldest natives declared that they had never before endured such cold. As far north as Augusta the Savannah River had been coated with ice; and even below Saint Augustine fruit trees were dead. Yet Aleck did not lose courage. Miraculously he managed to live on six dollars a month and to save most of the four hundred dollars his profession brought him. There was no time for lounging with the idle crowds in the village. There was none for unprofitable frivolity. Perhaps it was better to stand a bit aloof from the people while he evinced his interest in them by championing the cause of the humblest man who appealed to him for help and charging no fee at all or one within the client's reach.

One of his first paying clients was a Mr. E. Ellington, concerning whom there was a story which Aleck Stephens was to tell for many a day to come. Several years before he contributed his twenty-five-dollar fee to the young lawyer's maintenance, Mr. Ellington had been laid low by a terrible form of malarious fever. The therapeutics of the time denied water to patients suffering from the illness so common to Georgians. The physicians had given up his case as hopeless. But Mr. Ellington lingered on, making himself more and more disagreeable by begging for water. One evening he was attended only by his negro boy.

"Shadrach," directed the dying man, "go to the spring and fetch me a pitcher of water from the bottom."

The boy insisted that he could not disobey the doctor.

"Shadrach, if you don't bring me that water, when I get well, I'll give you the worst whipping you ever had."

Shadrach did not relent, however.

"Shadrach, my boy, you are a good nigger, Shadrach. If you'll go now and fetch old master a nice pitcher of cold water, I'll set you free and give you *five hundred dollars*."

The loyal Shadrach was not to be bribed. The old fellow moaned and groaned, smacking his dry lips, and flicked a feathery tongue against the corrugated roof of his mouth.

"Shadrach, I'm going to die, and it's all because I can't get any water. If you don't go and bring me a pitcher of water, after I'm dead, I'll come back and *haunt* you. I'll *haunt* you as long as you live."

The boy was on his feet in an instant. "Oh, Lawdy, Marsa," he gasped. "You shall hab dat water."

The story runs that the old man drank the whole pitcherful—and more—and that the next day he was decidedly better. So it happened that Stephens was grateful to the superstition of the darkies that saved a paying client from the other world.

In his friendship with Bob Toombs, Aleck Stephens always found stimulation. The two lawyers met frequently at the courts and fell to occupying the same room at the inns. Far into the night two topics never failed to hold their interest—law and politics. So different physically and mentally, Toombs and Stephens supplemented each other's needs.

In 1835 Aleck Stephens was advised to leave Georgia in the hope of improving his health. Rather aimlessly he wandered to Pennsylvania to visit his father's brother.

"What business do you follow, Aleck?" asked his uncle by way of making conversation during one of the family dinners.

"I'm a lawyer, Uncle James."

The older man sat for a moment, silent and perplexed.

"Aleck, don't you have to tell lies?" he asked at last.

Aleck was sure, however, that his profession was an honest one. Indeed he had laid down for himself certain rules that he intended following to the letter. First, he had determined to investigate the justice in each case that he was asked to defend or to prosecute. Then, if he did not believe the client entitled to success before the court, he would not appear in his behalf. He resolved also never to prosecute a criminal case if he did not believe the accused person guilty. He would not refuse to engage in the defense of a man charged with homicide if there was the slightest doubt as to fact, motive or criminal intent. Yes, Alexander Stephens believed that there was no profession more worthy than the one he had chosen.

Unless, of course, it was politics, which he thought of according to the Greek concept. The promotion of good government he believed to be the highest aim of the individual citizen. The affairs in his own state and those that centered about the national capital had for years interested him deeply. Accordingly, it occurred to Aleck to drop in upon President Jackson on his return from Pennsylvania.

The young man thought that he knew a great deal about the condition of the country. He had already lived through stirring times. The year of his birth had witnessed the victory over England, which had definitely established the greatness of young America. Concerning all that had happened since, he felt that he had first-hand information. Those were the days when people took their politics from the stump and when national issues were of such vital moment as to be discussed when two or three citizens gathered together at the corner store or before some fireside. The absence of a daily press made it necessary for statesmen to report to their constituents all that had taken place in state and national capitals and to defend the stands they had taken on public questions.



THE LITTLE FELLOW
Who Practised Law in Crawfordville.

Alexander Stephens was brought up a Jeffersonian of the Crawford and Troup schools in Georgia. His earliest definite recollections of a presidential campaign centered about the year 1824. Then his neighbors were of one mind: everybody the boy knew supported Crawford for president. Before he cast his first vote, however, there had been a split in southern ranks. Across the state line in South Carolina lived a great man who was enunciating doctrines, which, founded as they undoubtedly were upon the Constitution's original intent, had within them elements of danger. John C. Calhoun was directly responsible for the rift among the Democrats of Georgia. Since college days Aleck had studied the doctrine of nullification. In 1830 he had been thrilled by the speeches of Hayne and Webster. Though his study of the history of the Constitution itself led him to the belief that the states, having voluntarily entered into a confederation, might withdraw at their pleasure, he thought that they should not remain in the Union and nullify an act of Congress. Furthermore, he concluded that expediency demanded differences to be settled within the Union. Perplexed, he watched the kaleidoscopic changes that were taking place throughout the country. The Jeffersonian Republicans had become the Democratic-Republican Party. In Georgia the Crawford-Troup wing opposed the doctrines of Calhoun and was known as the State Rights Party with William H. Crawford as its president. John Forsyth, then in the United States Senate, opposed both wings and organized the Union Party of Georgia, nominating Joel Crawford for governor. By 1833, Alexander Stephens, then of age, had taken his stand. His first vote was cast with the Unionists for Joel Crawford.

Unionist, though he called himself, young Stephens was thoroughly indoctrinated with the principle of state rights. He believed that the Constitution safeguarded those rights and that under it peace and prosperity and liberty were

possible. The theory of government which he had evolved during the years of his adolescence, was destined to remain with him through life. No question of expediency, no danger to the nation could be sufficient reason for the federal government to exercise any powers other than those that had been specifically delegated.

Indeed it was rather an opinionated young man who called upon the President in 1835. Old Hickory, in his dressing-gown and slippers with his silver pipe at his side, received the youth from Georgia.

"What's the news from your state?" the President inquired.

Aleck told of the recent uprising of the Creek Indians. The matter was uppermost in his mind, for when leaving Georgia he had narrowly escaped one of the outrages. Stages had been captured, he said, between Columbus, Georgia, and Montgomery, Alabama. Passengers had been massacred. Aleck had seen perfectly clearly that there was little Georgia could do, for the disturbances had not been intra-state but inter-state. So he saw no reason to blame Major Howard, of Georgia, for his inaction.

The President listened to the story with rising indignation.

"In God's name where's Howard?" he roared.

"I don't know," Aleck replied solemnly. "As Major Howard's forces are under the control of the Georgia legislature, there is the question of jurisdiction."

"Jurisdiction—by the Eternal!" Old Hickory boomed. "When the United States mail is robbed and citizens murdered, you talk to me about jurisdiction!"

Aleck had the wisdom not to call forth other explosives from the President. He merely listened while the older man outlined plans for quelling the disturbance. Nevertheless, he was deeply interested in the question of jurisdiction which had been so lightly cast aside. Much more important than the individual citizen was the sacred Constitution. No

amount of presidential thundering could shake loose convictions that had been firmly rooted in his young mind. He knew a great deal about government, he thought. At college he had read nothing else during his leisure hours. When the students, both the roustabouts and the diligent boys, had gathered in Aleck's room, it was politics that every one discussed, for Aleck had been rather a prude in those early days, serving neither drinks nor tobacco to guests who, he believed, needed all their faculties for conversational purposes. As he sat listening to Old Hickory there was in his mind a foreshadowing of thoughts that actuated him later when other presidents were guilty of usurpations that he became bold enough to resist.

His health slightly improved by travel, Alexander Hamilton Stephens returned to Georgia. Even though his body was still feeble, his mind was strong for the great work that he had begun to feel he would accomplish after all.

There was little in Crawfordville to interest a young man like Stephens. Therefore, he could work with fine concentration. The town, which had formerly amused itself by holding lotteries, by gander-pulling, and cock-fighting, having gone religious, offered few diversions other than revivals. Into these the people threw themselves with fine emotional abandon. Once at least Alexander Stephens wandered in while the religious fireworks were going on. He found himself thoroughly disgusted. The minister exhorted. The people prayed and wept and sang and shouted. Mourners filed down the aisle, unable to contain themselves. On the back seat sat a young man with his pretty wife and in close proximity another young man from the village. The husband was swept forward among the mourners. The wife and the other young man were the victims of an emotion akin to religious zeal. While the husband knelt at the front of the church, beseeching God to save his soul and have mercy upon the greatest of sinners, the wife was abandoning

herself to illicit embraces. Aleck, an unimpassioned on-looker, decided that "there dwells but little good in the human heart." "I need not tell," he wrote in his diary that night, "how the furies seemed to urge on the man, and how female weakness showed itself. Alas, the world!"

Since Aleck could never be quite in tune with the villagers, work became his nepenthe.

CHAPTER V

AMONG THE SOLONS OF GEORGIA

WHEN Stephens returned to ply his trade in Crawfordville, large national questions were changing party alignments. Of these the Bank of the United States was perhaps foremost in the popular mind. The bank had been created in 1781 as a part of Hamilton's program for the stabilization of national finances. In 1811, disapproving of the principle involved, Jefferson's party had allowed the charter to lapse. Five years later, however, because of financial exigencies, a renewal had been granted. President Jackson, looking upon the bank as an enemy of democratic government and declaring it an "un-American monopoly," doubted its legality despite the decision rendered in its favor by the United States Supreme Court. Sponsored by Hamilton and befriended by Henry Clay's followers, it appeared as part of the old aristocratic order. Because its officials were known to be hostile to Jackson, they were suspected of using bank money to defeat the commoner's reelection. The President, therefore, was fighting the bank with all his rugged power. In 1835 the finances of the country were in excellent condition; revenues were pouring in; and the national debt had been paid. The surplus, according to the President's plan, was being lent to states without interest. Many Cassandras there were to make prophecies which the authorities did not heed.

A new party, made up of Jacksonian opponents, was conceived and brought forth by a union of Clay's National Republicans and the anti-tariff and strict construction group led by Calhoun. The hybrid offspring was found to possess

in its make-up strangely opposing characteristics. The National Whig Party it was called, deriving its name from the old exponents of constitutional liberty. Its birth year was 1834. In the South it drew largely from the people of wealth and distinction. The young lawyers, Alexander Stephens and Robert Toombs, were soon leaning noticeably in its direction.

News had reached Georgia of a movement that at first seemed ridiculous, then ominous. It was clear at last that the abolitionists of the North were intent on depriving the South of her slaves. Having become more and more aggressive, they organized themselves in 1833 formally into the Anti-Slavery Society. There was an immediate reaction in the South. Undoubtedly a few northern incendiaries had been circulating their doctrines among the slaves. To deal with the situation, several counties in Georgia organized vigilance committees, which took upon themselves the task of bringing offenders to justice outside the law.

In Taliaferro County a convention of citizens was called to the end that such a committee might be established. Young Aleck Stephens was among those who attended. The people were hysterical in their protestations against the methods of the northern agitators. Emotion, and not reason, swayed the convention. Resolutions, subverting established authority, were prepared and were about to be passed without opposition. Aleck Stephens, looking like a small boy who had slipped in through curiosity, sat listening. Finally he rose to his feet. His high girlish voice addressed the chair. Then he began to speak, slowly and deliberately at first. The delegates were silent as Aleck gathered momentum. He was beseeching the people to stand by the supremacy of the law. Slavery was protected by the Constitution. Agitators could be dealt with in the courts. At last the room shook with his eloquence. He resumed his seat. When the vote was taken, the resolutions went down

in defeat. Aleck was satisfied. He had seen a vindication of the actuating principle of his life, and he knew at last what gradually had been dawning upon him: he was an orator with power to draw the masses toward him through the magic of his eloquence and logic.

In 1835 the South was looking with interest toward Texas. Aleck was a boy of seven when the United States, in order to secure all the Floridas, had yielded in its treaty with Spain all claim to the territory then comprising Texas, which had been a part of Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase of 1803. He was nine when Mexico abandoned Spain and set up its own dominion, and he was twelve when President Adams futilely offered to buy the territory for a million dollars. He could remember well, however, when the states of Coahuila and Texas became members of the Mexican Federal Union, for that was the year that he entered the Academy at Washington. He had watched with interest the migration of the southerners to the great Southwest and had agreed with those leaders who prophesied that the settlers' disregard of the Mexican law prohibiting slavery—a law adopted to win favor with the negroes of Haiti—possessed its elements of danger. He was twenty-one when these southern immigrants, having found Mexican rule contrary to their tastes, framed a constitution and put it into operation without the sanction of their mother country. With no prescience concerning the part he was later to play in the annexation of Texas, he watched the subsequent developments, vaguely realizing that the new state would figure in American politics. In 1835 the Mexican government was overturned and Santa Anna was made dictator. The independence of Texas was established at San Jacinto on April 26, 1836. The future of Texas, peopled as it was with southerners, hung in the balance.

Aleck knew that the times in which he was living were fraught with great possibilities. He was thankful that his

health was better. When he attended a reunion at the University in August, 1836, his classmates remarked upon the change in his appearance. He had grown two inches since his admission to the bar, and he had gained twenty-five pounds since college days. He now measured almost five feet ten inches, and he weighed all of ninety-six pounds.

Therefore, he found no good reason not to yield to persuasion and allow himself to be nominated for a seat in the state legislature. He warned his friends that his stand against nullification had not added to his popularity and that his opposition to the county vigilance committee had laid him open to the accusation of being unsound on slavery.

The campaign was heated from the beginning. Georgians were taking their politics seriously. A summer canvass in the state was a sport in which all the people engaged. Though Stephens knew that the odds were not in his favor, he worked diligently. It was not until election day, however, that his mettle was put to a real test. When everything was going against him, he mounted a box in a public place and made one of the speeches for which he was becoming locally famous. The week before, he had been exceedingly ill. He was so weak that the auditors thought that he would fall at the completion of each sentence. Yet the young man poured forth with oratorical fervor arguments that carried power to convince. As he spoke, Aleck must have realized that physical weakness, reenforced by mental strength, was an almost invincible bulwark against opposition. He would appeal to the sympathies, as well as to the minds, of his hearers. Men shuffled off their former convictions and hurried to the ballot box to cast their votes for Little Aleck.

Alexander Stephens was twenty-four years old when he took his seat among the solons of his state. Taliaferro and adjoining counties knew him certainly. Yet to the rest of Georgia he was a stranger who must win his spurs or return to his constituents defeated. His chance came when the

bill for the rebuilding of the Western and Atlantic Railway was before the House. To the debate that had lasted four days Aleck had listened attentively. He had given much thought to the subject. Concerning it he had made an entry in his diary as early as 1834. "The stupendous thought," he had written, "of seeing engines moving over our hills with the safe and rapid flight of fifteen miles an hour produces a greater effect in dissuasion of the undertaking than any discovered in favor of it." Then he had added optimistically, "Speed to the work!"

As he listened to the words of the veterans on the floor of the House, the young man's imagination was fired. The road meant the ultimate joining of the East with the West. It symbolized territorial expansion, power, future growth and prosperity. These men were without vision. They were thinking of the present, while youth was looking toward a future, great and inspiring. Aleck rose to his feet. "Mr. Speaker," he called in high treble. As Judge Iverson L. Harris later wrote to Williams Rutherford, "Every eye was turned to the thin, attenuated form of a mere boy with a black gleaming eye and cadaverous face." The road meant the rehabilitation of Georgia, the young man was saying. It would link the cotton- and the rice-fields of the seaboard and gulf with the grain-fields of Tennessee and the West. It would serve generations yet unborn. The House listened to the argument. When the young representative took his seat, there was a burst of applause from the floor and the gallery. Charles Jenkins, then leader of the House, shook the speaker's hand immediately after adjournment.

"That speech was electrical," he said. "Sir, that speech will send you to Congress."

Aleck was happy over his first legislative effort. The bill passed. In addition, Stephens of Taliaferro was no longer one of the crowd. He was a member singled out from among the others who merely warmed the seats in the House.

Oratory had done the work. Great was oratory! To the gods who had bestowed upon him the divine gift, the humble recipient was profoundly grateful. Feeling that he could now speak with some authority, he wrote piously and sophomorically upon the subject to Dr. Thomas Foster.

"I have come to the conclusion since I came here," he said, "that words are, if you please, moral instruments capable of effecting much when properly handled and directed. And it is altogether useless, at any and all times, to talk without having in view some object to effect."

Then, from the perspective furnished by his twenty-four years, he ridiculed citations from Scipio and Hannibal, so frequent among the orators of the time, as well as allusions to Greece and Rome, Tyre and Carthage. Instead of reading Blair for rules, Scott and Addison for figures, Byron and Shakespeare for quotations, orators would do well, said he, to study the people they were addressing. Yet at the same time young Aleck Stephens, though certainly remembering his constituents, was making use of all the erudition at his command.

Another bill, quite different from that involving transportation, called forth the young legislator's active support during the session of 1836. It had to do with the higher education of girls. The Georgia Female College, the first college for women in the South, was seeking a charter. The frail little representative, looking himself so much like a girl, spoke in behalf of the new venture. Reviewing his career many years later, Stephens said, "The movement at the time was the occasion of amusement to some. I may be pardoned in this presence for saying that it met my warm support. The experiment proving successful far beyond the expectations of its most sanguine friends, the example became contagious—not only in our state but in adjoining states."

His efforts in behalf of the weaker sex gave to Aleck a consciousness of strength. So long he had been befriended

by those physically superior to him, by those who pitied his poverty, that he enjoyed to the uttermost stepping into the position of benefactor. He was understanding why it was more blessed to give than to receive, for in so doing the donor could enlarge that nebulous quality known as self-respect. It was because he disliked to be the beneficiary of even small favors that he had hesitated to borrow a horse, even from his uncle, during that first struggling year at the bar and why he recorded in his diary the depth of his humiliation upon the occasion when his uncle had refused the loan. That was why he had so quickly paid the Presbyterian Board and why he stinted himself of necessities in order to wipe out the debt to Aaron. For ever he was goaded into achieving one sort of strength to take the place of another that he could not possess.

Stephens's fame was spreading throughout Georgia. No one who saw and heard him ever forgot Little Aleck of Crawfordville. His power over juries became a legend that grew in the telling. People in trouble asked him to take their cases—persons of wealth and persons without a penny to their names. He was the friend of negroes and poor whites, refusing only those whom he thought unworthy. As his income increased, he thought more often of the little half-brother Linton. The boy had lived four years with a grandmother and maiden aunt. In 1830 he had been adopted by his mother's brother, John W. Lindsay. Aleck had always loved the lad. Since the death of his father, he had felt nearer to him than to any other person. In 1837 he asked that the boy be transferred to his guardianship. His request granted, Aleck brought Linton to Crawfordville and entered him in the school of Simpson Fouché. Here was some one upon whom his starved affections could feed, whom he could educate and mold into a man after the image of his own ideal. Aleck was happier than he had ever been.

But the village of Crawfordville was daily becoming a less

imposing background for statesmanship. Never very much of a place, it was growing smaller, for during 1836 and 1837 there was an exodus that would have alarmed an average young lawyer. Still, it never occurred to Aleck to join the migration. He would be all the more famous for having emerged from his own little Nazareth.

During the latter part of the Jackson administration the financial condition of the country reached a crisis. The President had interpreted his reelection as a verdict against the Bank of the United States. In defiance of Congress and by the removal of two secretaries of the treasury, he had succeeded in turning national revenues over to state banks. A flutter of credit and distress in the money market had resulted immediately. In 1836 the Bank of the United States accepted a charter from the state of Pennsylvania. Government funds were placed in the President's "pet" banks in the various states. Since all were banks of issue, paper money flowed for a time from every hamlet. The surplus that had existed in 1835 was soon sunk in schemes the states had evolved to take care of it. Speculation had boosted the sale of public lands. The President's command that his "pets" keep specie to cover their circulation availed little, for few knew which were the specie banks. By the time Van Buren was inaugurated—March 4, 1837—the country's fabric of credit was completely tattered. Many factors entered into the crash: the money market had not accommodated itself to the changed status of the Bank of the United States; the increase in the volume of imports had sent much specie out of the country. When the paper that had gone west for the purchase of public lands came back for call, the collapse was immediate. Corn had risen from fifty-three cents a bushel in 1834 to one dollar and fifteen cents; flour from five dollars a barrel to eleven dollars. Banks failed all over the country. In New York bread riots were the order of the day.

In Georgia the financial situation was acute. Lawyers were the only men who prospered, for the increased litigation threw to them an immense volume of business. Alexander Stephens's health, however, did not survive the crisis. Just at the time when he was needed most and when remaining at work would have been most profitable, he was desperately ill. From his bed he managed somehow to keep up with a great deal of his practise, his brother Aaron entering his court records for him. During the summer he traveled in the mountains of Georgia with little benefit. He had become a dyspeptic, subsisting almost entirely on his diet of bread and milk. Yet in September he was again elected to the legislature. Even when he was unable to leave his room for weeks at a time, his clients' cases were not neglected.

While the legislature was in session Little Aleck managed to reach his seat, with the assistance of his cane and the strong arm of some friendly member. In the summer of 1838 his physician advised a sea voyage. On May 25, 1865, when he arrived at Fort Warren as a prisoner he remembered that twenty-seven years before to the day he had seen Boston Harbor for the first time as a free man in search of the liberty that only health can bring. While he was away Robert Toombs took care of his practise.

The two lawyers had already been dubbed the Castor and Pollux of Georgia. Antithetical in appearance and personal characteristics, they were thinking alike on public questions. In 1832 Robert Toombs had cast his first vote for Andrew Jackson. If Stephens had been of age, he also would have voted the Democratic ticket. After the force bill of the administration, both men joined the opposing State Rights Party, which elected Stephens to the legislature in 1836 and both Toombs and Stephens in 1837. In the battle that centered about Georgian finances, the young men stood together. The fight between the advocates of

further inflation and the champions of sound money was heated and acrimonious. Stephens and Toombs earnestly, though unsuccessfully, opposed a bill to palliate the situation by permitting the central bank to borrow one hundred and fifty thousand dollars. The following year, moreover, it was largely through their efforts that the legislature refused to permit the bank's capital to be increased to five million dollars. They expressed their opposition to the Jackson and Van Buren régimes by voting against a resolution denying the constitutionality of the Bank of the United States, though the measure passed by a majority of twenty-three votes. On a measure denouncing the pet banks, Stephens voted a consistent *aye*, but Toombs, wavering in his stand against the administration, answered *no* to the roll-call and swelled the volume of the victorious voices.

Consistency, moreover, was not a jewel with which Toombs cared to adorn himself. His mind was his, to be changed at his pleasure. He never felt constrained to explain the various stands he had taken. Once when he was interrupted during a speech by a man who reminded him of a vote on record in the *Journal* of the House, "Yes, it was a damned bad vote," he said. "What are you going to do about it?"

His was not Stephens's method, however. With the last breath in his body Aleck would have defended himself against attacks of all kinds. Conviction guided his every act. When he reversed a policy, he made a public confession of his new faith and built up careful arguments in justification of his apparent inconsistency. It was, of course, the sense of inferiority, engendered by his pitiable childhood and adolescence and nurtured during a manhood that his poor little body placed always on the defensive, that caused him to walk warily and to resent the slightest insult to his integrity or to his intellect. Though the methods of the dauntless Toombs could never be his, contact with his friend was al-

ways energizing. Toombs plunged into his arguments like a bull attacking a toreador, ruthlessly trampling his antagonists, annihilating the opposition. Stephens won by calm logic which his engaging personality reenforced. Pushed to the wall, however, he could hurl sharpened invective that advanced with a deadly thrust, though somewhat hidden by a coating of humor. The one commanded; the other persuaded. Together Castor and Pollux were invincible foes and friends worth cultivating. No one who had ever seen the handsome dashing Toombs ever forgot the man. Stephens's emaciated body, massive head and burning eyes created an impression equally indelible. By the late 'thirties Georgia recognized the power in the Toombs-Stephens liaison.

In the spring of 1838 Alexander Stephens first achieved fame outside his state. He was sent as delegate to a commercial convention held in Charleston. His companions were merchants from Georgia who stood in need of an eloquent spokesman. On his own stamping-ground Stephens had somewhat overcome the handicap of his youthful appearance. In Charleston he was again made to realize that no one who did not know him would suspect that he was a man of note. Arriving at the boarding-house where he and his friends were to spend the night, he dropped upon a couch in the parlor. When the landlady entered and saw one of her guests standing, she turned reprovingly to Stephens. "Get up, sonny," she said, "and let the gentleman have a seat." Though he had learned long ago to take such speeches good-naturedly, the entries in his diary show that he was never happy when he pondered upon his physical appearance. Immediately after remarks of the sort the landlady had made, he attempted to find compensation in some spectacular display of intellectual prowess.

At Charleston opportunity soon came to show that in wisdom Alexander Stephens was no lad. The subject under

discussion at the convention had to do with the importance of direct trade between the South and Great Britain. Concerning the mode of action South Carolina and Georgia differed materially. Orators of the caliber of General Hayne, General Hamilton and the Honorable William Preston had spoken with convincing eloquence. The little man from Georgia had been an inconspicuous member of the audience. As usual he had sat listening and awaiting his opportunity to speak.

"At length," said John Savage, giving an account of the meeting, "an individual rose in one of the boxes, the tones of whose voice were as rich and penetrating as a Swedish nightingale. . . . He snatched their laurels from the most brilliant lawyers of the occasion."

When Aleck returned to Georgia, he knew that his fame had spread abroad—at least through the breadth of the Palmetto State. It seemed, however, that his health had set up an obstruction to his progress over which his ambition could not vault. Yet his constituents insisted on sending him to the legislature, and he continued to handle the enormous volume of his practise.

In the fall of 1839 when Linton left Crawfordville to enter the University at Athens, the older brother saw the train speed into the darkness and returned home, lonely and forlorn. Writing to Linton on the eve of the boy's graduation, he confessed that when he had told him good-by almost four years before, he had not expected to live to see the completion of his college course.

With the departure of Linton, Aleck succumbed for a time to the melancholy moods. Liberty Hall, the comfortable home he had purchased and in which he had begun to dispense hospitality, now seemed desolate. Daily he found time for long letters to Linton. There was no doubt that he took his guardianship with the utmost seriousness. Keenly he felt his responsibility for the boy's mental, spiritual and

physical development. He was distressed that Linton appeared not to like rhetoric. Evidently he did not understand how the subject should be studied. So the elder brother outlined a method that he had found effective. He was appalled when Linton hesitated to make a speech for which he had been chosen and urged him never to appear unless he could appear well and always to appear whenever the opportunity was presented. Alexander, than whose handwriting none could be worse, urged Linton to devote himself earnestly to chirography. Painstakingly he corrected the young student's English, warning him against the Georgian's use of "reckon," which he declared as bad as the New Englander's use of "guess." He discoursed on politics, philosophy, history, law and religion, extolled the learning of the ancients, quoted at length from Byron, Scott, Burns, Bulwer and Shakespeare, and emphasized the importance of good manners and self-discipline. He wrote also in some detail of the cases he was trying. When he sent Kirkland to the penitentiary for seven years for attempting to procure Farmer's negro woman to poison her mistress and when he got an acquittal for a penniless negro who had been accused of assault and battery upon a white man, he wanted Linton to share his pleasure in the verdicts. In the same letter he talked of God and changing into summer clothes too early in the spring. "This is the most dangerous season in the year," he warned, "for influenza and such catarrhal affections as sometimes end in consumption." Always he was affectionate and solicitous, even sending on several occasions twice as much money as Linton requested, though there was at the time another boy—John Byrd, a cousin—whose expenses at college Alexander Stephens was defraying. To the lonely little invalid there was infinite satisfaction in giving—perhaps the only real pleasure he ever found in life.

In 1841 he was obstinate in his refusal to be sent again

to the legislature. What with two boys at college and an expensive estate to keep up, he felt that he must devote himself to his practise that was fast getting out of all bounds. Tortured by dyspepsia, wracked by neuralgia, feverish with malaria, he knew that he was unequal to the additional tasks the legislature would impose.

Yet in 1842 he allowed himself to be nominated for the state Senate. The principal issue in the campaign served as a challenge he could not refuse to accept. His election would be in the nature of a vindication of the ineffective stand he and Toombs had taken in the General Assembly of 1838. The potential Whigs of Georgia were rapidly being welded together by their opposition to the central bank of the state. His victory at the polls erased whatever was left of the mortification he had experienced at the capital three years before when he and Toombs had fought in vain against reckless speculation.

Stephens's health, however, was worse than it had ever been. For weeks it was thought that he could not recover. He lay at Liberty Hall, delirious with fever, his pulse a hundred and twenty, his breast and side raw and blistered, coughing and expectorating distressingly. At last the local physician pronounced that the trouble was not consumption, after all, but "an abscess of the liver, which broke and drained through the lungs."

The indomitable will won at last. Little Aleck, leaning on his cane, was again able to hobble to his seat on the pleasant side veranda at Liberty Hall and now and then to ride through the village. There was enough strength left with which to begin the larger work that awaited him.

CHAPTER VI

IN THE NATIONAL MAELSTROM

THE summer of 1843! Alexander Stephens had been nominated by the newly organized Whigs to fill a seat in Congress vacated by the Honorable Mark A. Cooper, who was running in the gubernatorial campaign. The Democrats had chosen James H. Starke to oppose Stephens. The Whigs the year before had formally entered Georgia. Their platform was virtually the minority report drawn up by Stephens in 1842 for the senatorial committee on the state of the Republic. That members of the legislature are not the proper constituents of Congress and that senators in Congress are no more responsible to them than to any other equal number of citizens; that a national bank should exist; that the sale of public lands should be distributed without partiality among the states; and that duty on imports, though constituting the best way to meet the expenses of the general government, should be laid for revenue and not for protection—these were the fundamental principles of the platform.

The campaign was heated from the outset. Since Georgia had not adopted the districting plan enacted by Congress on June 25, 1842, the canvass was state-wide. Ill though he was, Stephens spoke in towns, cities and hamlets all over Georgia. At Cassville he debated William H. Stiles; at Rome and Chattoogaville, John H. Lumpkin; at Daholonega, Solomon Cohen; at Canton, Howell Cobb. It was very clear that the little fellow and the new party were getting the best of the arguments. Democrats, certain of victory in the early days of the campaign, began to show

signs of alarm. In a letter written while he was stumping Dade County, Stephens wrote, "Last year our [Whig] ticket got but one vote in the county—this year I think I shall get at least forty." Unquestionably the Whigs were threatening the entrenchments of the older party. The Democrats determined that the best man they had must meet Stephens at Newnan and chose Walter T. Colquitt, veteran debater. Whigs implored the young candidate not to accept the older man's challenge. Colquitt was fresh and in health, they argued, while Stephens was weary and ill. Judge Colquitt, who lived at LaGrange only thirty miles from Newnan, would be among sympathetic neighbors; Stephens would come as a comparative stranger. Little Aleck, however, had no intention of tucking his tail and running. Not he! He wanted the world to know that he feared no man.

When the appointed night rolled around, the scattering of Whigs at Newnan could not conceal their nervous anxiety. The judge opened the argument. Clearly he was sure of himself, for the audience was friendly, and he knew his subject. A few days before, he had been heard to say that his hands itched to get hold of that little fellow Stephens. His attitude now showed that he expected to shake him as though he were a puppy. First he eulogized the great Democratic Party and ridiculed the upstart Whigs. Then he addressed himself to the candidate and spoke sneeringly of Stephens's size and appearance. "I could swallow him whole and never know the difference," he added.

From the *Journal* of the legislature, he showed that Stephens had voted against bills providing pensions for Georgia soldiers who had fought in the Creek War and against paying men attached to General Charles Nelson's command during the expedition against the Seminoles in Florida. The audience was with the speaker. A dreadful thing it was not to show appreciation in a substantial way to the country's

defenders. Stephens's friends sank lower in their seats. Some were so chagrined that they left the hall.

At last Little Aleck was on his feet. He seemed so frail that it was a wonder that the very applause which followed Colquitt's speech had not blown him away. His eyes were snapping, however, and his great head was tossed back. Yes, he had voted against those bills, he said. He was not opposed to pensions, but he knew that Georgia should not pay the debts incurred by the country when she was already contributing to the national fund. If the people would send him to Congress, he would see that the soldiers were adequately pensioned and that the bill was paid by the government for which it had been made. Certainly he had voted against the resolution that appropriated money for salaries to be paid to the Nelson troops. Then he turned to the Constitution. Here, he said, was explicit provision against appropriating money except by bill. He reached for the *Journal* and showed that, when the bill had been presented in legal form, he had voted for it. In constitutional government lay the only hope of liberty. Representatives of the people must have the knowledge and the integrity to stand by the Constitution. Then he opened the *Senate Journal*, which he had sent for while Colquitt was speaking, and brought the house down by showing that his vote and his opponent's had been identical.

"If Judge Colquitt should swallow me whole," he said, "there would be more brains in his belly than there ever were in his head."

The audience roared.

"Judge," some one called, "your hands itch to let him go now, don't they?"

It was a sort of political meeting that Georgians adored. A bantam rooster had worsted the big cock of the barnyard. The Whig ticket was triumphant at Newnan. The young candidate from Taliaferro County was elected to Congress.

Immediately on his arrival in Congress, however, Alexander Stephens was so ill that it seemed for a time that he was to take no part in the questions that were before the nation. His letters, written upon his partial recovery, testified that he himself had despaired of living. A physician came to the rescue, however, with a prescription of nitric acid, which either proved an effective hepatic or one that the patient thought effective. At any rate, the representative from Georgia was soon hobbling to Congress.

There Stephens availed himself of the first chance for notoriety that presented itself. The question before the House had to do with seating the members from those four states that had not adopted the districting plan of electing representatives. Georgia was among the delinquents. Her legislature had passed an act conforming to the federal law. The Governor had vetoed the measure, however. The bill, subsequently reenacted, had received executive sanction but too late to be effective in the election of the congressmen then in Washington. Some members were saying that the federal law, compelling the states to elect by districts, was unconstitutional and that congressional interference was in the nature of usurpation of state authority. Stephens disagreed. Congress had a right to make laws affecting its own membership. Though he would be swearing to his own hurt, he would adhere to the Constitution. He knew, moreover, that he would be returned without question. Though he and Robert Toombs, who lived in adjoining counties, had both been elected by the state at large, Georgians had had the good sense to place Wilkes and Taliaferro in different districts so that two of their best men would not be competitors for seats in the national House of Representatives.

On February 9, 1844, Stephens was heard for the first time in Congress, speaking against himself and in behalf of the sacred Constitution. The strenuous campaign that had impaired his health had been conducted in vain, it seemed.

The state-wide election had not been legal. The matter of seating him and the other representatives from the four states should be left now with Congress. If he should be denied membership in the House, he was ready to return to Georgia and conduct another campaign in his own district. His defense of the constitutional right of Congress over elections to the federal lawmaking body was vehement and convincing.

The new member had put himself on the national map. No one in the House would ever forget Alexander Hamilton Stephens, of Georgia, or would doubt that here was a man who could speak with power and logic, a man who placed principles above personal interests. The House had listened attentively. It was reported that even John Quincy Adams, who seemed never to hear anything that was said in congressional debates, commented favorably on the young Georgian. However that may be, in June of that year the veteran statesman wrote a few lines of very poor poetry, which Stephens treasured to the end of his days.

“TO ALEXANDER H. STEPHENS, ESQ., OF GEORGIA

“Say, by what sympathetic charm,
 What mystic magnet’s secret sway
 Drawn by some unresisted arm
 We come from regions far away.

“From North and South, from East and West,
 Here in the People’s Hall we meet,
 To execute their high behest
 In council and communion sweet.

“We meet as strangers in this hall,
 But when our task of duty’s done,
 We blend the common good of all
 And melt the multitude in one.

“As strangers in this hall we met,
 But now with one united heart,
 Whate’er of life awaits us yet,
 In cordial friendship let us part.”

Coming as they did from the man whom the South considered its most powerful enemy, the lines were preserved by Stephens as strong testimony to a friendship that could rise above political differences. The former President, since his entrance into the House in 1831, had alarmed the South by continually harping on slavery. The petitions and memorials, which he was for ever presenting, were at first little heeded. On December 28, 1837, however, John C. Calhoun had been exasperated into taking some action against the persistent meddling of Massachusetts. Adams's petition of that year had requested the abolition of slavery not only in the District of Columbia but in the states as well. The fiery South Carolinian clearly thought that the time had come to put New England in her place. Therefore, early in 1838 he offered resolutions that were adopted. They included reiteration of the states' voluntary entrance into the Union and of their right to settle matters of a domestic nature. Since slavery had existed when the Constitution was framed, any attempt to overthrow it now was unconstitutional. Furthermore, any attempt to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia interfered with the rights of the people in the District. Later in the year the South Carolinian had been reenforced by Atherton of New Hampshire, who seemed also to be annoyed by the other New Englander's persistence and who introduced a series of resolutions that passed with large majorities. That this government is a government of limited powers was stated in the first and that Congress has no jurisdiction over slavery in the several states. The second declared that petitions for the abolition of slavery were a part of the plan to destroy the institution. The third contended that continued agitation was against the true spirit of the Constitution. The purpose of the resolutions was summed up in the last. Petitions and memorials, Atherton said to the satisfaction of the House, should be laid on the table without being printed, debated or referred.

Despite the rebuff at the hands of his colleagues, John Quincy Adams, at the time that he penned his agreeable line to Stephens, was by no means silenced. His position had been somewhat strengthened by the last of Atherton's resolutions. Now, instead of fighting against slavery *per se*, he was urging the right of petition and was appearing as one persecuted by gag-law. From the beginning, therefore, the member from Massachusetts and the member from Georgia belonged to violently opposing camps. John Quincy Adams had started something that both North and South knew could not be annihilated by resolutions. In 1844 state rights and slavery were uppermost in the minds of congressmen and senators.

The admission of Texas was merely an issue of the anti-slavery agitation. When recognition of Texan independence was before the Senate in 1837, John C. Calhoun, whose interest in the extension of slavery could not be denied, had avowed that he was not only in favor of recognizing Texas but also of accepting her into the Union. It was perfectly clear that Texas, if admitted, would enter as a slave state. Webster, in speaking before a New York audience, had expressed the general feeling of the North when he said, "In my opinion, the people of the United States should not consent to bring into the nation a new, vastly extensive, slaveholding country."

The question had been evaded until 1843. Then it was found that the Democrats favored annexation and that the northern and southern Whigs differed with each other. In the meantime Harrison, elected president by the Whigs, had died in 1841, a month after his inauguration, and Tyler had succeeded to office. President Tyler, a southerner who had once been a Democrat, appointed Calhoun in 1844 as his secretary of state. Immediately Texas ceased to be a dormant issue. The year that Stephens entered Congress, every one knew that a bomb was about to explode.

On March 7, 1844, Alexander Stephens wrote his friend James Thomas, of Sparta, Georgia :

“The annexation project is a miserable humbug got up as a ruse to distract the Whig party at the South, or per-adventure with even an ulterior view—that is the dissolution of the present confederacy.”

Furthermore, he expressed the belief that Tyler would destroy a country willingly if he could no longer be the chief ruler and that Calhoun was using Texas for his personal aggrandizement. He and Toombs had long been foreseeing the danger of a solid South against a solid North and had been insisting that the good of the country demanded that both sections be represented in the two major parties. It now looked as though the situation they had feared was inevitable.

Calhoun not only promised to lend the Army of the United States to Texas to be used against Mexico but also signed the treaty of annexation, which the Senate promptly rejected. The question, therefore, became the issue of the presidential campaign of that year.

Alexander Stephens went as a delegate to the Whig Convention which opened in Baltimore on May 1, 1844. Among other members of the delegation from Georgia were Senator Berrien, Dawson, T. B. King, General Clinch, Joseph H. Lumpkin, Colonel Sayre, Joshua Hill and Robert Toombs. It was known that Stephens did not stand with the majority of his party on the annexation question. Indeed in 1839 in a speech before the Georgia legislature he had advocated the admission of Texas. He had also made no secret of his opposition to the Tyler treaty.

In a letter to Linton written May fourth he described the impressive gathering at Baltimore. There were thirty thousand Whigs in the procession, he said. Yet so vast a number was not missed from the crowd. “But one feeling, one spirit,

and one hope animated every breast in the countless thousands," he added. "You will learn before you get this that Clay and Frelinghuysen were nominated." With the candidates Alexander Stephens was content.

May twenty-second had been set as the date for the Democratic Convention. Stephens was watching developments with interest. May fourteenth he wrote Linton that he could see some leanings toward Tyler but that he did not believe the President could be nominated for another term. Congress, he said, was being continued indefinitely. "The Democrats do not intend to quit here until they can see some land ahead, even though it should be some of the points of Texas."

According to Stephens's prophecy, Tyler was rejected. Instead, James K. Polk, of Tennessee, was nominated with George M. Dallas, of Pennsylvania, as his running mate. For the first time the abolitionists flocked into a party and nominated James G. Birney, of Michigan, as their candidate for the presidency. The campaign issue was now clear-cut. The country was to decide whether or not Texas should be annexed. It was a foregone conclusion that the new state, settled by southerners, would desire to perpetuate slavery.

Despite all the weighty matters before Congress, Stephens's first session had its pleasant interludes. In December, 1843, Linton visited Washington. Aleck enjoyed introducing this younger brother to the friends he had made in Washington. Here was his own handiwork of which he had a right to be proud. Physically Linton was the antithesis of Aleck. Undoubtedly there was a future for a young man who had just been graduated with first honors from college and who had already begun the study of law in the office of Robert Toombs. By exposing Linton to the influences in the capital, Stephens felt that he was completing the education for which he had assumed full responsibility.

From the beginning of his congressional career Stephens was in demand at social gatherings, for he was a merry conversationalist with an anecdote to suit any subject that was introduced and a pleasant way of turning a friendly joke upon some member of the group. Most of his stories dealt with characters he had known in his boyhood back in rural Georgia. There were several that concerned a schoolmaster by the name of Day under whom the young Aleck had studied for a brief period. The congressmen who knew nothing of such customs as prevailed in the Old Field schools of Georgia were vastly amused by Stephens's stories. This Mr. Day, it appeared, enjoyed his bottle and now and then became a trifle "disguised." Once when he denied the students a holiday they had expected, a mutiny was planned, which came to a head with the master's threatening to flog a popular boy who had been guilty of insolence. In a flash all the boys fell upon Mr. Day and pinned him to the floor. They would not let him up, they said, until he promised not only a holiday but a treat also. "All right, all right," gasped the master. The treat was a gallon of liquor, for which a big boy was dispatched forthwith. Then teacher and pupils got "disguised" together—and there was no ill feeling at all. Though Aleck had been too young to enjoy the treat, he never forgot the incident.

There was another schoolmaster about whom the young congressman liked to talk, though Aleck had never been the beneficiary of his wisdom. Duffie was the fellow's name. He was a preacher and a politician as well as a teacher, and guiltily he harbored love for a good horse-race.

"Boys," Stephens quoted him as saying once, "there's going to be a horse-race Saturday afternoon. Now, boys, don't you go to it. But, boys, if you do go to it, don't you bet. But, boys, if you do bet, mind what I tell you: if you do bet, be sure to bet on Abercrombie's mare."

All this and much more took place during the good days

of the Old Field schools of Georgia. Congressmen in Washington listened as Stephens recounted the stories, sorry that they had not been country boys in Georgia.

It was not long after the three parties had thrown their presidential candidates in the field that Stephens attended his first diplomatic dinner. Before he went to bed that night he wrote Linton an enthusiastic account of the affair, quite after the manner of a girl who had just made her first bow to society. The dinner was given by Senators Archer and Berrien, who had just moved to quarters just across from those Stephens occupied. When Stephens arrived at the appointed hour, he found that Barrow, of Louisiana, and the Belgian chargé were the only other guests in the drawing-room. Very soon, however, the others were announced:—the British Minister, the French Minister; the late Minister to Mexico; the late Texan plenipotentiary and several members of Congress. The pomp and ceremony of the occasion amazed the young man from Georgia. Accustomed to the groaning boards of the South, he was surprised, when the company was seated at dinner, to find nothing on the table but flowers, glass, strawberries and jellies—surprised that the eleven courses were served ad seriatim, and that the plates were changed after each course. “The servants who handed the meats,” he explained to Linton, “were called waiters, those who served the wine were called butlers. They were all colored but one, a French cook, who figured largely, and all wore silk gloves and had on aprons.” The six wine-glasses beside each plate were kept constantly filled with Madeira, claret, champagne, brandy and hock. Perhaps because there was an abundance of food to absorb the liquids or perhaps in deference to the one lady present—Mrs. Berrien—no one got drunk. The seating evidenced meticulous planning. Mrs. Berrien sat at the center of the table, the French Minister on her right, the British Minister on her left. In writing of it all to Linton, Aleck omitted

no detail. He even mentioned the snuff-boxes that were passed to the guests at the conclusion of the dinner and that coffee was served in the drawing-room "in the handing order." Of course, every one was jovial; and, of course, conversation flowed merrily. Aleck described the appearances, manners and the costumes of the guests, and mentioned that the Brazilian chargé, small, dark and sprightly, "tried to show off like a flea in company."

Impressed though he was, Stephens did not forget to put in a few strokes in connection with the Texas dispute. He found that General Thompson, late Minister to Mexico, who had been a member of Congress, opposed Tyler's annexation program. Before the evening was over, the General had promised to address a mass meeting in Madison, Georgia, on July thirty-first.

Contrary to all expectations, the presidential campaign went against the Whigs. Clay was defeated, and Polk was elected. The gauntlet was down. It was clear that the winter session of Congress must decide the issue. Alexander Stephens and Robert Toombs, reelected to Congress, girded their loins for the struggle that was inevitable.

CHAPTER VII

STEPHENS OPENS THE DOOR TO TEXAS

THE winter of 1844-45! Congress had assembled. The stage was set for high drama, with Texas and Oregon so dominant in the theme that the tariff was almost forgotten. On the two questions Alexander Stephens's mind was made up. In addition, he had learned a bit about political maneuvering during his one term in the House.

President Tyler gave his interpretation of Polk's election. The people, he said in his message, had declared in favor of immediate annexation. A man of Stephens's good sense, Whig though he was, could enter no denial of a truth so self-evident. He knew that Clay's vacillation had cost him the election. The candidate had first declared himself against annexation and alienated the friends of the measure. Later he had expressed the wish to see Texas added "upon just and fair terms" and the hope that the subject of slavery would not "affect the question one way or another," thus losing the support of many anti-annexation Whigs. Though Stephens could not always agree that the leader of his party was wise, he never ceased to admire the man and correctly to evaluate his ability.

On January 18, 1845, he wrote Linton of Clay's great speech on colonization that had been delivered the night before. Thousands of people were in the House and galleries, he said. Acres of others were turned away. Afterward Sheppard, of North Carolina,—whom Stephens described as "more Whiggish than Clayish,"—had remarked that "Clay could get more people to run after him to hear him speak and fewer to vote for him than any man in America."

Yet Stephens never joined the ranks of Clay's critics. The Kentuckian was powerless to stay at the moment the onward rush of the enthusiastic annexationists. But Stephens saw that something might be accomplished by closet diplomacy.

As soon as Congress convened the administration measure was introduced by Charles J. Ingersoll, who, by the way, had been one of the guests at the diplomatic dinner which Stephens had attended the spring before. Other plans were presented, all of which Stephens disapproved. One afternoon, while Texas was being kicked like a football from party to party, Milton Brown, of Tennessee, crossed to Stephens's seat and suggested a conference, saying that he believed his friends in the Senate would agree to a compromise measure. In Stephens's room that night a resolution was framed—the phrasing Brown's and the substance Stephens's. Because Ingersoll had left slavery unsettled and had provided for the assumption of the Texas debt, there seemed the possibility of danger ahead.

It was in behalf of the Brown resolution that Stephens spoke on January 25, 1845. Failure to settle the slavery question in the new territory, he said, would lead to inevitable discord. As for the debts, we had at the time enough of our own. It was, moreover, difficult to ascertain the exact amount that Texas owed, for there was much discrepancy between the various estimates. It seemed wiser, therefore, to leave Texas to handle her debts just as other states had handled theirs. Concerning the wisdom of annexation, however, he entertained no misgivings. Texas had gained her independence and now asked for admission. Rightfully she could claim the United States as her mother country, for her people were Anglo-Americans with no ties that bound them to Spanish Mexico. Furthermore, expediency prompted annexation. As a cotton- and sugar-growing country, she knew that rivalry with the United States would be unwise. Since one of her navigable streams flowed into the Missis-

sippi and the others into the Gulf near by, she wanted to prevent possible conflicts with the neighboring republic. Then, too, the vast lands of Texas could indefinitely take care of our surplus population.

Frankly Stephens acknowledged to Congress that the admission of Texas would "give additional power to the southwestern sections in the national councils" and that as a southerner he welcomed any reenforcements that might come thereby. The tide of immigration had so continually flowed westward that already the West was vying for ascendancy with the North and South on the floor of Congress. "Why should not the South also be advancing? . . . Let her too enter into the glorious rivalry, not with feelings of strife, jealousy, or envy—such sentiments are not characteristic of her people—but with aspirations prompted by the spirit of a laudable emulation and an honorable ambition?"

He denied a desire for the extension of slavery. Texans were already slaveholders. Only the blacks could stand the hot summers in the cotton- and rice-fields of the South. In a confederacy such as ours domestic questions must be settled within the confines of the various states and not by the federal government. Accordingly, he argued that the people who lived in the new state should be free to make their own decision in the matter of slavery, committing himself to a policy from which he never deviated.

"I am no defender of slavery in the abstract," he continued. "Liberty always had charms for me, and I would rejoice to see all the sons of Adam's family, in every land and clime, in the enjoyment of those rights which are set forth in our Declaration of Independence as 'natural and inalienable,' if a stern necessity, bearing the marks of the Creator himself, did not, in some cases, interpose and prevent. Such is the case in the states where slavery now exists. But I have no wish to see it extended to other countries; and if the annexation were for the sole purpose of extending

slavery where it does not now exist and would not otherwise exist, I should oppose it. This is not its object, nor will it be its effect. Slavery already exists in Texas and will continue to exist there."

On the day this speech was made the resolution acceptable to Stephens came to a vote in the House. It provided against the assumption of the Texas debt and for four slave states to be carved out of the Texas territory if the people presented constitutions asking that slavery be allowed. Alexander Stephens had done some effective work since his conference with Milton Brown: he had won for the resolution the support of seven other Whigs whom he persuaded to follow the sectional, rather than the party, interests. These men held the balance of power. Without their defection the annexation project could not have been carried to its conclusion. The final vote stood one hundred and nine to ninety-nine, the eight bolting Whigs having decided the issue. The bill, somewhat amended, passed the Senate, went through the House on the last day of February, and received Tyler's signature just before Polk's inauguration. Stephens had the satisfaction of knowing that, in its details, it was not altogether pleasing to President Tyler, whom he honestly detested.

The Texas speech was the most important one the young orator had ever made. He had prepared it with care, and he had corrected the reporter's notes painstakingly. Indeed, from the beginning of his career Stephens had been sensitive to the errors in the printed versions of his speeches, always writing the newspapers that had let errors creep in and demanding that wrong impressions be speedily made right. Earnest in his desire to appear well, he frequently complained that neither his exact language nor the structure of his sentences had been preserved. Consumed with anxiety to know what people were saying about his speech on annexation, he talked to fellow members of the House. In a

letter to Toombs he expressed his satisfaction. The Whigs, he said, as far as he could ascertain, were not criticizing the stand he had taken. He wanted, however, to hear from the South. Perhaps a good friend would tell him honestly how this speech had been received. Accordingly, he wrote to Thomas W. Thomas, asking to be told what the Whigs of Hancock were saying concerning his speech and his vote. Soon enough he was to discover that he had displeased the South, though he had brought about the victory. He had not defended slavery strongly enough to suit the sensitive southerner. He had really not advocated the principle of extension. Had he not said that he was no defender of slavery in the abstract? The South was becoming hot-headed and unreasoning. Men who fifteen years ago had actually worked upon tentative plans to end the institution had been made rabid champions of slavery in both the concrete and the abstract because of the activities of the northern abolitionists. A sensitive person in public life suffers a great deal. Alexander Stephens, standing by his convictions, spent many an uneasy hour.

His conscience, his ambition, and his desire for approbation, moreover, kept him plugging away at a rate that would have exhausted a man with twice his strength. In a letter to Linton he outlined his daily routine. At half past eight every morning he rose, allowed himself twenty minutes for dressing, ten for glancing over the newspaper, and then breakfasted at nine. Until twelve he devoted himself to the study of American history, current and past. Until four in the afternoon he was always to be found at the House. From adjournment till seven—with a few minutes out for tea—he answered the letters that had accumulated during the day. After closing his correspondence, he read and studied until midnight unless interrupted by callers or by some social engagement.

There were callers, moreover, and there were social en-

gagements. Frequently Cobb and Lumpkin, of Georgia, who lived next door, dropped in for a chat. It was during this session of Congress that some of the older members of the Senate, of the House and of the Judiciary included young Stephens in their gatherings. Among the men he mentioned frequently in his letters were Judge Story, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, Chief Justice Taney, Judge McLean, Judge McKinley, General Clinch and Jacob Collamer. Again and again he referred to the rare "Attic nights" as chief among the privileges he enjoyed as congressman.

The companionship of men with whom he had much in common seems for a time to have lifted the cloud of gloom, for in Stephens's letters and in his diary appeared less of melancholy. Never in his life was there a time when he did not appreciate a good joke or when his sense of humor did not rescue him from fits of depression. So much did he enjoy Judge Story's excellent yarns that he often recounted them to Linton. The Judge used to say that a man should laugh for at least one hour each day, and certainly adopted the advice he gave others. A story that Judge Collamer, of Vermont, used to tell over and over never failed to amuse Judge Story. Collamer had a way of talking to himself. Whenever some one ridiculed him, he told of another man who, similarly chided, had replied, "I like to talk to a sensible man, and I like to hear a sensible man talk." General Clinch also was the means of furnishing his friends a deal of amusement. Stephens records in his diary, for instance, that the old General one morning, late as usual, came puffing and panting into the House just as his name was being called.

"No," he called loudly.

"General," said Stephens, "say 'here.' It's the roll-call."

"Damn!" Clinch replied. "I don't care. I'm against all they do anyhow."

Sick or well, genial soul that he was, Alexander Stephens found pleasure in Washington.

Still, with all his duties, social and legislative, he never lost sight of the obligations imposed by his guardianship. Soon after the momentous Congress had convened, he took time to send Linton a book on etiquette. It seemed that General Clinch had remarked that the young man paid more attention to his mind than to his manners. The older brother was no little disturbed. Perhaps he had been remiss in his training. Perhaps, after all, he had emphasized mental education to the exclusion of social. In great detail he explained to Linton that the amenities were important, especially for a man who hoped to become an eminent lawyer.

He could not doubt that he was giving the boy every advantage. After having spent several months in Toombs's office, Linton was then matriculated in the senior law class at the University of Virginia, where Aleck trusted the contacts more than the instruction. In the spring of 1845, he suggested that Linton plan to enter Harvard after his graduation at the University. "The additional expense," he urged, "would not be an object, I think, compared with the advantages to be derived." When Linton expressed his willingness to study at Harvard, Aleck was delighted. "Your last six months, I take it," he wrote, "have been sort of a holiday, you must now go to work." He sent the warning that life would be more serious in Cambridge than it had been in Charlottesville. "You will find no card playing, horse racing, cigar smoking there. You must, therefore, drop your Virginia habits and go to work." And this when Linton had been awarded a degree from the University of Virginia after half a year's residence!

CHAPTER VIII

POLK'S PRIVATELY CONDUCTED WAR

ALEXANDER STEPHENS heartily disapproved every move made by the Polk administration. He could be friendly with Democrats. He could even vote with them when the interests of the South demanded that he lay aside his alliance with the Whigs. Yet he could not endure such secret diplomacy as Tyler and Calhoun had initiated and such tortuous, autocratic and unconstitutional methods as characterized Polk's régime from the moment the new President stepped into office. His indignation, kindled during the inaugural address of March 4, 1845, leaped into a steady flame as month by month he watched Polk's devious machinations.

Drunk with their recent victory, the Democrats wanted more land, and more power at any cost. They were scornful of England's claims in Oregon. What did they care for the rights of the weak little Republic of Mexico? Polk had declared that our title to the whole of Oregon as far as $54^{\circ} 40'$ north latitude—in other words to the southern boundary of Alaska—was clear and that he intended to maintain it. Stephens had no patience with a stand so patently unjust. In 1825 Russia had seemed the likely claimant to the disputed territory. It was then that Monroe had entered his warning against European aggression. With England and the United States, Russia had agreed to make no claim south of $54^{\circ} 40'$. Henceforth English and American squatters had occupied the land informally. Though the northern boundary seemed to Stephens a matter to be settled by arbitration and not by presidential proclamation, one of the

battle cries of the Polk campaign had been "Fifty-four-forty or fight." Such tactics were thoroughly revolting to a man accustomed to weighing evidence and reaching decisions fair to the contestants.

Soon it appeared that the strength of England made arbitration seem advisable. Not so, however, in the case of poor revolution-torn Mexico. Texas had already claimed as her northern boundary 42° and that part of Coahuila that lay between the Nueces and the Rio Grande del Norte as hers. Polk, who even before Texas had been admitted had accepted her contention as just, immediately sent General Zachary Taylor to the bank of the Nueces. Later he re-enforced the command by four thousand men. The following winter, when the President ordered Taylor to advance to the Rio Grande, the Mexican Commander at Matamoras demanded that the United States forces withdraw to the Nueces. Taylor refused. The war that resulted was a series of victories of strength over weakness. The President had acted upon no authority but his own.

Alexander Stephens was incensed. All his life he had studied the Constitution. All his life he had loved his country because he thought it safeguarded liberty and provided against such usurpation of power, such autocracy, as he was then witnessing. When the people babbled of victory, he was indignant. What was victory at the cost of liberty? His utterances then were not unlike those which were later to distress President Davis. Where was the glory of defeating a foe that lacked organization and resources? Never had Congress been placed in such an embarrassing position. A president, having taken upon himself the fixing of Texan boundaries, permitted his troops to occupy the disputed territory and then declared that the Mexicans had passed the boundaries of the United States and had "shed American blood on American soil," and that war existed by the act of Mexico.

Thoughtful men made up the personnel of that twenty-ninth Congress, men who were later to play important parts in the greatest drama of American history, the material for which was being gathered. John Quincy Adams was still at work in legislative halls. David Wilmot had been sent from Pennsylvania; Robert M. T. Hunter from Virginia; Armistead Burt and R. Barnwell Rhett from South Carolina; William L. Yancey from Alabama; Jefferson Davis from Mississippi; John Slidell from Louisiana; Andrew Johnson from Tennessee; Stephen A. Douglas from Illinois; Daniel R. Tilden from Ohio; Lumpkin, Cobb, Stephens and Toombs were among the Georgians. These were not men who would lightly pass over crimes committed by a president. Whigs and Democrats alike were distressed and perplexed. Yet national honor was at stake. There was nothing to do but declare war upon Mexico.

Alexander Stephens, however, was watching his chance to let the world know what he thought of the whole disgraceful affair and to suggest a way out of the difficulty. Toombs was already screaming from the housetops his condemnation of Polk: "The conquest and dismemberment of Mexico, however brilliant may be success of our arms, will not redound to the glory of our Republic." That was Toombs, fearless and explosive always. Stephens was content to wait until he could prepare a logical argument and deliver it convincingly.

Twice he spoke before Congress on the Mexican War—and in no uncertain terms. He charged that Polk's sending Taylor into the disputed territory was a "masked design" to bring on war for the President's personal aggrandizement. He attacked Polk for acting without the authority of Congress.

"I hope never to see the day when the Executive of this country shall be considered identical with the country itself in its foreign relations, or when any man, for scanning his acts, however severely when justly, shall on that account

be charged with opposition to his country. Such is the case only where allegiance is due to a crown, where people's rulers are their masters; but, thank God, in this country we can yet hold our rulers to an account. How long we shall be permitted or be disposed to do so I know not; but whenever we cease to do it we shall become unfit to be free."

It was the real Stephens speaking, the man who could not put expediency above principle, the man who never forgot his devotion to an ideal and who, years later, was arraigning the head of a new confederacy under whom he served as vice-president.

"I am not, as some gentlemen seem to be, the advocate of war in the abstract—war for war's sake. I hold all wars to be great national calamities. I do not claim that war can or should always be avoided. . . . I am no non-resistance man. I am far from holding that all wars are wrong. But I do hold that they ought never to be rushed into blindly or rashly. This ultima ratio—this last resort of nations to settle matters of dispute or disagreement between them, should always be avoided, when it can be done without a sacrifice of national rights or honor. And the greatest responsibility rests upon those at the head of affairs, to whom are confided the interests and destinies of a country, that they do not disregard the heavy obligations of this most important trust. . . .

"There is much said in this country of the party of progress. I profess to belong to that party; but am far from advocating that kind of progress which many of those who seem anxious to appropriate the term exclusively to themselves are using their utmost exertions to push forward. . . . It is to progress in these essential attributes of national greatness I would look: the improvement of mind, 'the increase and diffusion of knowledge amongst men,' the erection of schools, colleges, and temples of learning; the progress of the intellect over matter; the triumph of the mind over animal propensities; the advancement of kind feelings

and good will amongst the nations of the earth; the cultivation of virtue and the pursuits of industry; the bringing into subjection subserviency to the use of man of all the elements of nature about and around us; in a word, the progress of civilization and everything that elevates, ennobles, and dignifies man. This, Mr. Chairman, is not to be done by wars, whether foreign or domestic. Fields of blood and carnage may make men brave and heroic, but seldom tend to make nations either good, virtuous, or great."

The little man, pleading eloquently in behalf of a weaker nation, could not have understood the prophetic quality of his words. Yet perhaps even then vaguely he knew that his country was rushing toward the great national calamity which through the years that were to follow he was to try in vain to avert.

It was shortly after this speech that Burt, of South Carolina, brought Alexander Stephens an important message: John C. Calhoun wanted to talk to him. Stephens was flattered. He had never admired the great Carolinian. Yet here was the sort of recognition that he had always craved. Yes, Burt might arrange the conference. The meeting somewhat changed Stephens's attitude toward the man with whose nullification and territorial extension policies he had been at variance.

Calhoun, it seemed, agreed fully with all Stephens had said. He could not, however, at the moment afford to lose his influence with Polk, for he was endeavoring to get the President to accept England's proposal that the northern boundary be compromised at 49° north latitude. When the Oregon matter was settled, he would not hesitate to denounce Polk in the Senate. In the light of the part Calhoun had played as secretary of state under Tyler in lending troops to be used by Texas against Mexico, there was apparent hypocrisy in the stand he declared himself ready to make. Yet Stephens seemed not to doubt the sincerity of his words. Perhaps his judgment was somewhat clouded by

Calhoun's flattery. After all, the Georgian was still a young man, while the Carolinian had fought for many years in the public arena. Then, too, Stephens endorsed Calhoun's efforts to settle by arbitration the dispute with England. The President's letters to England had filled him with consternation. If any man could stop them, Calhoun could. Earlier in the year Aleck had written to Linton, expressing the fear that Polk's insistence upon 54-40 would lead to war. "England has rights in Oregon, and we shall have to admit them," he had said, "and the position of our chief Magistrate will have to be abandoned. This will lower us in the eyes of foreign nations. Such has never been the case before." Yet a bit of humiliation seemed better than war. He was glad that he and Calhoun could agree upon two important subjects.

Commendation from a stranger, however, no matter how eminent that man might be, could not soothe the sting of criticism that came from another quarter. Herschel V. Johnson, of Georgia, who had been one of Alexander Stephens's closest friends, was attacking the Mexican War speech in the *Federal Union*. When Little Aleck was deeply hurt, he had to do something quickly. Accordingly, he wrote Johnson and demanded retraction. When none was forthcoming, Stephens, who never could stand criticism—certainly not from a person who should have observed the laws of friendship—challenged Johnson to a duel. In the man there was much of the small boy who had stood defiant before the Irishman O'Cavanaugh, crying, "Sir, you shall not speak to me that way," and looking about the schoolyard for the stone that he would hurl toward the offending teacher. The frail little man, like the frail little boy, wanted the world to acknowledge his superiority, to defer to him, and to treat him with the respect he craved. For years Stephens could not forgive Johnson for the dignified refusal he sent. Until 1855 the two men did not speak. Then,

when Herschel V. Johnson was elected governor of Georgia, the old friends were brought together. In 1860 Stephens was active in support of the Douglas-Johnson ticket; and it was Johnson who came with Linton in 1865 to see the little prisoner at Fort Warren.

There was certainly enough that year to induce the old melancholy moods. "I am beginning to think that Congress is the last place that a man of honor and honorable ambition would aspire to," Stephens wrote. "There is a recklessness of purpose here perfectly disgusting and most alarming." Yet Linton supplied him with needed diversion. In February, 1846, the young student was preparing for examination at the bar. Aleck's letters were full of advice. To him the brother was still a child who must be spurred toward achievement. Aleck urged him to study diligently so that he might acquit himself with honor. He quoted Howell Cobb as saying that Linton had a great deal better mind than Aleck and pointed out the responsibility imposed by so generous an endowment. To him Linton was not merely the most beloved of human beings but part of Aleck's career that must not be allowed to fail. In March Linton passed the bar with flying colors, yet Aleck's tutelage was never to end.

Nor, it seemed, were the troubles that grew out of the War with Mexico. In August, 1846, while the United States forces were piling up one victory after another, the President—although liberal appropriations for the prosecution of the war had already been made—asked for two million dollars for the purpose of settling the difficulties with Mexico. It leaked out at once that the money was to be used to gain additional territory. Stephens was immediately alarmed, for he knew that the slavery agitation would be given new impetus. His forebodings materialized on August eighth when David Wilmot, of Pennsylvania, proposed his condition to the appropriation bill, which provided that

slavery should be for ever prohibited in all the territory to be acquired by the United States from Mexico. The Wilmot Proviso received a majority of nineteen in the House, but in the Senate it went down to defeat. Its opponents, therefore, had a chance to muster their strength for a second fight.

On January twenty-second of the following year, with the Mexican War still being waged, Stephens asked for a suspension of the rules in order that he might propose a resolution against the administration's military policy. Since the honor of the country must be sustained, the paper stated, as long as war existed, since the object to be gained was not clear to the people, and since speedy termination of hostilities was desirable, it was resolved that the war was not being waged for conquest or for the dismemberment of Mexico and that it should be ended upon terms honorable to both countries. Though the motion to suspend the rules and vote upon the resolution was defeated by twelve votes, Stephens was not discouraged. He had begun a fight which he intended to see to its conclusion. With renewed energy he tackled the President's appropriation bill.

Polk was then asking the thirtieth Congress for three million dollars, instead of two. When the Proviso was again tacked to the bill, congressional fur began to fly.

Alexander Stephens's health and spirits were distinctly improved. In other words, he had put on his fighting boots and was thinking less of his own miseries, though he attributed his optimistic outlook to Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, which he had recently read. He did not believe that the Wilmot Proviso could be passed. "The whole government, I think," he wrote to Linton on January fifth, "is about to break down—at least the administration. There is no concert in any party. . . . The North is going to stick to the Wilmot amendment, and then all the South will vote against any measure thus clogged."

He was at his best when he rose on February twelfth to speak on the three-million-dollar bill. It amazed him, he said, to find any man believing that a president should conduct a war and that Congress should merely vote the appropriations he requested. Again he reminded Americans that "the king can do no wrong" was a doctrine suited only to the despotisms of Europe. Again he declared that the war was of the President's making. At last, pronouncements showed that it was a war for conquest. When he addressed himself to the Wilmot Proviso, it was clear that his defense of slavery had been strengthened by echoes of criticisms that were still ringing in his ears. "It is sufficient . . . that the morality of that institution stands upon a basis as firm as the Bible; and upon this code of morals we are content to abide until a better be furnished. Until Christianity be overthrown and some other system of ethics be instituted, the relation of master and slave can never be regarded as an offense against the Divine law."

To what extent Stephens was consciously courting the popularity he had lost by the first speech on the Mexican War there is, of course, no way of determining. Perhaps he was not consciously insincere. A sensitive man is an easy subject for auto-hypnotism. Certainly the methods of the abolitionists had been high-handed. Exaggerated stories of cruelty on the southern plantations had been circulated throughout the North. The negroes in the South had been incited to the commission of outrages that terrified the whites. The slaves owned by Stephens were well-treated and contented with their lot. The gradual evolution of his attitude toward slavery indicates that Stephens was building up a defense for something that he knew to be inherently indefensible. His falling back upon the Scriptures was an admission of weakness. Had he lived in Utah, is it not possible that to satisfy the demands of his constituents he would have cited Biblical justification for polyg-

amy? In extenuation, however, it should be remembered that Stephens was a southerner and that he was surrounded by a hysteria of the sort to impair judgment.

In the thirtieth Congress a raw-boned, ungainly fellow from Illinois leaped into sudden prominence. He was a Whig by the name of Abraham Lincoln. He and Alexander Stephens were immediately drawn together in their common opposition to the Mexican War. Both men had voted for the resolutions condemning the action of the President. Like Stephens, Lincoln expressed his views in a set speech made upon the floor of the House. The friendship, begun in 1847, survived even the stormy years of the war.

In dealing his most telling blow against the administration, Stephens had the support of Abraham Lincoln. Cleverly the gentleman from Georgia introduced into the resolutions tendering thanks to the soldiers the phrase "in a war unconstitutionally begun." Stephens knew that those words would end the Mexican War.

In 1847 the appropriation bill passed the House with a majority of only nine. The Senate, however, struck out the amendment. The House then agreed to the bill as it came from the Senate. With the defeat of the Wilmot Proviso, the slavery issue was merely postponed. A storm had passed without a cloudburst. Yet thunder rumbled in the distance. Hearing it, Alexander Stephens tried in vain to close his ears.

CHAPTER IX

LITTLE ALECK ELECTS A PRESIDENT

EIGHTEEN FORTY-EIGHT! Alexander Stephens was thirty-six. Not so old for a man who had been heard upon most of the important questions before the nation! He was feeling better, moreover. Indeed it was seldom necessary for him to lean heavily upon his cane when walking from his lodgings in Washington to his seat in the House. Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Linton's progress in the courts, the friendliness of his constituents, the pleasant vacations at Liberty Hall, and the companionship of kindred minds which he enjoyed at the capital all combined to make life worth living. Five years ago he had been prominent only in his own state. Now he was headed toward national greatness. Leading members of Congress were deferring to the little man from Georgia. Liberty Hall, long a sort of Mecca for politicians from Stephens's own state, was now attracting men from a distance. There hospitality was free to all. It was Robert Toombs who said that his town did not need a hotel because any decent man could stay with him and that the others were not wanted. The remark, however, might have been made by Stephens. Meals at Liberty Hall were timed to suit the arrival of the trains. Eliza, the cook, was never annoyed because of not being able to know how many would be seated at the table. She merely put a few unknown names in the pot and helped her master to make every one welcome. Aleck, moreover, had laid aside the puritanical ways of college years. He no longer disapproved of tobacco, cards and moderate drinking, and he had on hand good wine and good cigars for himself and his guests. After break-

fast in the morning and after tea in the evening he commandeered his guests into a game of whist, casino or piquet. What with friends and work and books, he was far from unhappy as he passed from youth into the maturer years.

Grave matters confronted the Congress of 1848. Oregon, for instance, was waiting to be organized into a territory. By the treaty of peace with Mexico vast lands had been acquired for which some sort of government must be established. Early in the year Douglas, of Illinois, introduced his Oregon bill into the Senate, which was immediately sidetracked. Meanwhile the House was wrangling ineffectually over the details of the territorial issues. The presidential campaign of the following summer had already proved distracting. Whigs and Democrats were both searching for sure winners.

As for Alexander Stephens—he was engaged in the gigantic task of making General Zachary Taylor president of the United States. The idea seems to have sprung full grown from his own fertile brain. In it there was a sort of irony and poetic justice that Stephens enjoyed. The Democrats had entered upon a nice easy war that would bring glory to their administration. The victories had been won, moreover, by a Whig general. What a boomerang it would be to elect that general Whig president of the United States! The little Georgian had paved the way for his big coup by those resolutions of thanks to the soldiers and by the clause of condemnation aimed toward the Tyler and Polk administrations. The ball that he had set rolling at the convention in his own state was gathering momentum—not, however, without a few telling prods from its owner in Washington. It seemed important to enlist the interest of influential congressmen in Taylor's behalf.

In March Stephens moved into the Rush House with Robert Toombs, Mrs. Toombs and their little daughters. There opportunity was afforded for informal entertaining.

Members, dropping in for meals and for long chats in the evening, naturally discussed the conventions scheduled for late spring. Months before, Stephens had conceived the idea of organizing a Taylor-for-president club. "Young Indians" was the name by which the group of Taylor men in Congress were known. At first Stephens was able to enlist the interest of only a few. Abraham Lincoln, of Illinois; Truman Smith, of Connecticut; John S. Pendleton, William Ballard Preston and Thomas S. Flournoy, of Virginia; and of course Toombs, of Georgia, were responsive at the outset. The organization grew so steadily that it soon looked as though Taylor's nomination could be brought about. Stephens was counting on the popularity the General had won in Polk's privately conducted war.

In New York State the feeling was so tense that it was almost impossible to maintain order at political gatherings. Several meetings had been attempted with the same disastrous results. In the pivotal state it was imperative that a Taylor man be given a respectful hearing. Stephens knew that Toombs was the man to send to New York and told him so. His very presence commanded attention; he could argue convincingly. Toombs yielded to his friend's persuasion and agreed to go to New York, if the meeting were arranged. Determined that the audience should be orderly, Stephens sent for Isaiah Rhynders, celebrated captain of the Roughs of the great city. Could he assure Toombs a hearing and how much would it cost? asked Stephens. The trick could be worked for two hundred dollars, Rhynders replied. Immediately Stephens made the bargain. Rhynders suggested that Toombs meet the boys at a saloon the evening before the meeting and establish the good fellowship that would be essential to success.

Aleck Stephens felt that if Bob Toombs couldn't handle the audience with such help as Rhynders could give him, then nobody could. He liked to recount in Washington Toombs's

experiences with gatherings in Georgia. Bob had a very bad habit in those days of chewing tobacco while he spoke and spraying the people who sat on the front row. Once a red-haired fellow, who had had too much to drink, called out, "Don't let your pot boil over." "Take your fire from under it then," Toombs had replied to the red-head.

There was simply no way of getting the best of Toombs in repartee. Once an auditor had accused Toombs of having said something in a former speech. He had never said anything of the kind, Toombs denied. When and where had the man heard him make such a statement? Whereupon the man rose and gave the time and place. "Well, I must have told a damn lie," Toombs countered and proceeded with his argument.

Telling the young Indians about his friend's many victories on the stump, Aleck expressed confidence that the New York meeting would be a success.

Robert Toombs fell in line good-naturedly. As a matter of fact, the affair was much to his liking. He went to New York, treated the men at the saloon, chatted and drank with Bill Sullivan, Bill Ford and several other boxers whom Rhynders had engaged, and returned to his hotel after Rhynders had assured him that all would go smoothly.

When the speaker appeared at the hall the following night, an immense crowd had gathered. The Taylor men, however, showed signs of extreme nervousness. Robert Toombs ascended the platform, looking his best and in excellent trim for speaking.

"Fellow citizens of New York," he began.

"Slaveholder!" cried a man in the audience.

"Slaveholder!" echoed another.

"Fellow citizens of New York," Toombs repeated.

"Hurrah for Clay!" cried some one.

"Hurrah for Clay!" came the echo.

Mr. Toombs made a third beginning.

"Fellow citizens . . ."

"Slaveholder, slaveholder, slaveholder!" resounded through the house.

A free-for-all was beginning.

"Put him out, put him out, put him out," came from the four corners of the hall. Rhynders's men were at work.

"Whatcha putting me out for?" several asked. "I haven't opened my mouth."

"Out you go," was the rejoinder. "There's a chalk mark on your back."

The boxers were not people who dealt in words. They were hurling offenders through the open door. Scattered among the audience, their henchmen had marked the backs of the men who had created the disturbance. In a few moments an audience sat quiet to hear the address that Robert Toombs had been trying to make. Forty or more rowdies had been ejected, and no others came to fill their places. The orator plunged into his argument with characteristic force and earnestness.

"Three cheers for Zach!" a man cried.

Others took up the refrain. Zachary Taylor had gained a foothold in New York. Hearing of the result of the meeting, Alexander Stephens was content. Though he had never abandoned his personal loyalty to Clay, he had ceased to believe that the Kentuckian could carry the country and was anxious to see the Whigs nominate a man who could be swept into office upon a wave of popularity.

The Democrats met in Baltimore on May twenty-second and nominated Lewis Cass, of Michigan, and William O. Butler, of Kentucky; June first the Whigs at Philadelphia nominated Zachary Taylor and Millard Fillmore and adopted Stephens's resolutions concerning the Mexican War as their platform in so far as the war was concerned; and the Free-Soil factions of the Democrats and Whigs put Martin Van Buren and Charles Francis Adams in the field.

Congress, continuing in session, soon seemed affected by the summer heat. John M. Clayton, of Delaware, chairman of a special senatorial committee, had introduced a bill, providing territorial governments for Oregon, New Mexico and California. By it slavery was to be prohibited in Oregon, but in New Mexico and California the question was to be referred to the territorial courts with the right of appeal to the Supreme Court of the United States. The Clayton Compromise passed the Senate and was immediately tabled in the House, to come up for discussion during the hottest days in August.

Stephens was among those who opposed the measure, agreeing with Thomas Cowin who said, "It does not enact a law; it enacts a lawsuit." Of late the Georgian had been silent in the House. He had won his spurs, however, and he knew that, when he did speak, the members would listen. It was earlier in the year that Lincoln had written to his law partner, "I take up my pen to tell you that Mr. Stephens of Georgia, a little, slim, pale-faced, consumptive man, with a voice like Logan's, has just concluded the very best speech of an hour's length I have ever heard. My old withered, dry eyes are full of tears yet." Stephens had clipped and preserved the press comments that had appeared immediately after all his public appearances. Now that he had no laurels to win, he could afford to bide his time, occupy himself with political maneuvering and speak only in response to the spirit's insistent urgings. Against the Clayton Compromise he felt irresistibly impelled to protest.

It had been rumored that Stephens, of Georgia, would be heard on August seventh. Members were in their seats; galleries were packed. The little man had never been more earnest in his life. His voice was shrill and clear when he made his deliberate beginning. As usual, it gathered volume. The compromise, he declared, meant the South's abandonment of her position. By suggesting that the decision be

left to the Supreme Court, the North was striving to exclude the southern institution from all the new territory. The South, however, had no desire for all—half would satisfy her. She had a right to demand that her citizens, migrating westward, be left some spot where they could settle with their slave property and not incur expensive litigation. The report of Clayton's committee had implied that the laws in force in the territories should be sustained. It was known that Mexico had abolished slavery prior to its war with the United States. Therefore, the bill, instead of being a compromise, appeared in the light of a complete concession to the policy of the Free-Soilers. He was asking for a compromise that involved a fair division of the territory.

When the session of Congress came to an end, no governments for the territories had been set up. The representatives had left a legacy of contention to their immediate successors.

Returning to Georgia, Alexander Stephens was amazed to find that his conduct was being censured, amazed that any of his constituents should approve the Clayton Compromise. As usual, criticism wounded him deeply. He had done his best. Now he was ready to take to task any man who disagreed with him.

Accordingly, he was in no happy frame of mind when word came to him that his old friend, Judge Cone, had called him a traitor to the South. Alexander Stephens a traitor to the land that he loved! Alexander Stephens who had worked solely for the advancement of Georgia! He did not believe his friend had said anything of the kind. Still, if he discovered that his informant had spoken truthfully, he would slap Cone's face. Little Aleck slapping huge Judge Cone! The people were intensely amused. Stephens was cut to the quick. He would show them that he was no coward and that no man could call him a traitor with impunity.

Shortly afterward he met the Judge at a Whig gathering.

"Judge Cone," he said with dignity, "I have been told that you, for reasons of your own, have denounced me as a traitor, and I take this opportunity of asking you if the reports are true."

"No, sir," replied the Judge. "They are not true."

"I am very glad to hear you say so," Stephens said with a trifle less formality. "Of course I do not desire to be in any way offensive to you, but in order that we may have no further misunderstanding through misrepresentation of others, I think it right to tell you that I have said I would slap your face if you admitted having used the language attributed to you."

Stephens thought that the incident was closed. Georgians, however, were too fond of a joke to let the matter rest. Everywhere the Judge went some one inquired if Little Aleck had slapped him yet. They hoped he could hold his own against his violent assailant. If he needed help, he could call upon his friends. Everybody laughed except the Judge, whose sense of humor seemed to have disappeared. Cone wrote Stephens, asking for a public retraction of the threat. Stephens replied affably that, since the threat had been contingent upon Cone's admission of the charge, there was no reason for hard feeling.

Several days later Cone found Stephens alone on the piazza of the Atlanta Hotel.

"Mr. Stephens," roared the Judge, "I demand that you make immediate retraction of your threats against me."

Alexander Stephens straightened his slight body. No man could talk to him like that. Years ago he had made a decision when he stood face to face with O'Cavanaugh. Certainly now he was not afraid of Cone.

"Pardon me, sir," he said with exasperating politeness, "I have already written to you upon that subject. I must decline to discuss it further."

"Am I to take that for an answer?"

"It is the only answer that I have to give you."

"Then I denounce you as a miserable little traitor."

Instantly the cane upon which Stephens was leaning struck Cone squarely across the face. A dirk knife flashed in Cone's hand. Stephens, fencing quickly with an umbrella, received a cut on his arm. Then, like a mad man, Cone was upon him, gashing his breast, his body, his arms. Yet the little fellow was still standing, still fighting with all the strength that was in him. A man might call him a traitor, but no man could now accuse him of cowardice. Weakling though he had always been, he would not appear afraid. When Cone's great weight broke the umbrella, Little Aleck fell to the floor. Cone pinned him down and poised the dirk knife above his breast.

"Retract or I'll cut your cursed throat," he said.

"Cut! I'll never retract," Stephens gasped.

He caught the descending knife in his right hand. It cut through the muscles and tendons and into the bones. Then it was that men pulled Cone off his victim. The Judge was arrested. Little Aleck was taken to a hospital where for days he lay at death's door. He had been slashed from head to foot, one wound being but a sixteenth of an inch from his heart. Friends asked him to prefer charges against Cone, but he refused. He had put up a good fight, and he was satisfied thus to close the incident. Nevertheless, the Judge was fined a thousand dollars.

News of the encounter spread throughout Georgia. The people were sorrowful and indignant. Little Aleck could not be spared. Always a picturesque figure, he was now a hero. Hundreds thronged the Crawfordville depot. They had heard that their friend was not expected to live. The train arrived at last. Little Aleck had been pronounced out of danger. A shout went up from the multitude. It was weeks, however, before he sat again upon the pleasant piazza



THE CONGRESSMAN FROM GEORGIA

at Liberty Hall. It was months before he could use his poor mutilated hand, which through the rest of his life remained stiff and twisted and which accounts for the increased illegibility of his writing.

Yet when his friends insisted that he attend the Taylor mass meeting to be held in Atlanta on the fourteenth of September, he yielded to their entreaties. For him to be seen in his crippled state would be a real service to the presidential candidate, and it could not hurt his own cause in the state. Too weak to walk, he was borne by strong men to the carriage that waited before the door, and he was drawn by these men and others through the streets of Atlanta. "Thank God for Little Aleck!" the people cried as the strange procession advanced toward the meeting-place. Hats flew into the air. "Three cheers for Little Aleck and for Zach!" rang out from corner to corner. The hall was thronged with Georgians and with people from neighboring states. "Stephens! Stephens!" ran the echo as Alexander Stephens was carried down the aisle.

Judge Berrien opened the meeting with an address in advocacy of the presidential candidate. As the applause that followed his speech subsided, again there were cries of "Stephens! Stephens!" The audience wanted a speech from the man who had miraculously escaped the clutches of the enraged Judge Cone. Alexander Stephens tottered across the platform and rested his hand on the table for support.

"I am too weak to speak," he said. "But I will tell you a story. An old soldier of Doniphan's regiment returned to New Orleans after service in Mexico. Ragged and starving, he was taken in by a storekeeper, who fed and clothed him, gave him money, and sent him on his way. When the soldier was leaving, his benefactor asked if there was anything more he could do. 'No,' said the man gratefully, and he turned to go. 'You have already done a great deal.'

In a moment, however, he was back again. 'I forgot,' he said, 'there is one thing you can do for me. You can vote for Old Zach.' So now, like the soldier, all I have to say is—vote for Old Zach."

There was a riot of shouts and applause. It was clear that Little Aleck and Old Zach were slated for victory.

In a letter written to Senator John J. Crittenden, of Kentucky, September 26, 1848, "You have doubtless heard of the occurrence," Stephens said, "which put me out of the canvass in this state for three weeks past and upwards. I am now recovering slowly. My right hand is still in bad condition, and I fear I shall never be able to use it as formerly. I can now only scribble with my left hand—but enough of this."

Though the one fight of his life seldom entered into his conversation, it made a deep impression on him. Pushed out of the conscious mind, it frequently returned in dreams. Twice in his prison diary he mentions dreaming of Judge Cone, who had then been dead some time. Even through the pain and mortification, he must have realized that Cone had succeeded in binding Georgians closer to Stephens. Robert Toombs, whose love for Little Aleck contained much of the protective quality, wanted to wreak some violent vengeance upon Cone. Later in September he wrote Crittenden that Stephens had been cut down by a cowardly assassin and was unable to continue active in the Taylor campaign. Toombs's already large store of energy, however, seemed to have been doubled. He was speaking all over the state in behalf of the Taylor ticket, in addition to conducting his own campaign for Congress and canvassing Stephens's counties in the interest of his friend's election. Stephens and Toombs were returned to their seats and Zachary Taylor carried Georgia. Alexander Stephens had made Zachary Taylor president of the United States.

CHAPTER X

COMPROMISE FOR A DAY

CHAOS reigned after the convening of the thirty-first Congress. The old party lines were being for ever erased. The southern Whigs were classifiable with the Democrats; and the Democrats of the North, the northern Whigs and the Free-Soilers were about to merge. Stephens had become virtually a man without a party. Early in December at a Whig caucus he had attempted in vain to get his northern colleagues to agree not to press the Wilmot Proviso. Failing in his purpose, he announced that he would have nothing to do with a party that did not disconnect itself with the aggressive abolition movements. Whereupon he and Toombs and other southern Whigs left the caucus. That night he wrote Linton that the North was insolent and unyielding. What would be the result, he dared not prophesy.

Steadily Stephens's pessimism was deepened. In the last days of Polk's administration the southerners met in conference and listened to John C. Calhoun's manifesto, modeled as it was upon the Declaration of Independence and airing all the southern grievances. The Virginia legislature passed its resolutions, which declared that between the alternatives of "submission to aggression and outrage" and "of determined resistance at all hazards and to the last extremity," the sovereign people of their state could have no difficulty in making their choice. The Missouri legislature also passed resolutions of protest against the Wilmot Proviso. In Tennessee the Democratic State Central Committee said to the voters that the "encroachments

of our Northern brethren have reached a point where forbearance on our part ceases to be a virtue." The cotton states endorsed the Virginia resolutions. In the North excitement was great: the Wilmot Proviso must be maintained.

January fifteenth Stephens wrote Linton that he was looking deplorably to disunion as the inevitable outcome of the slavery controversy. In the halls of Congress he was hearing nothing but insults directed toward slaveholders. If any adjustment were made, he believed it would smooth matters out only temporarily.

In the Senate Calhoun, Clay and Webster appeared together for the last time. Old men they were, weary now of the long struggle. Calhoun had not lost his vitriol, however; Clay was still believing that the Union might be preserved; Webster showed the influences of the mellowing years and lost many old friends by advocating adjustment.

On January twenty-ninth Clay introduced into the Senate his "omnibus" bill, containing the celebrated compromises. It proposed the admission of California under its free constitution; that governments for the territories acquired from Mexico be established without slavery restriction; that payment be directed for the public debt of Texas contracted prior to annexation, for which the duties upon foreign imports were pledged, upon condition that Texas relinquish her claims to any part of New Mexico; that slave trade in the District of Columbia be prohibited; and that provision be made for the return of fugitive slaves. The resolutions further declared that the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia was inexpedient without the consent of Maryland and the people in the District and without just compensation to slave-owners, and that Congress had no right to interfere with slave trade between the states.

Before any part of Clay's resolutions had been presented in the House an important conference of members from

the North and South met in Alexander Stephens's rooms. Howell Cobb, Robert Toombs and Stephens, of Georgia, and Boyd, of Kentucky, represented the pro-slavery element in the House; William A. Richardson and McClernand, of Illinois, and Miller, of Ohio, the anti-slavery element. McClernand, who was at that time chairman of the committee on territories in the House, said that Douglas, as chairman of the senatorial committee, had expressed his willingness to act in concert with him. It was Alexander Stephens who got the group together at McClernand's suggestion. The upshot of the conference was the agreement that California be admitted with its free constitution, that the territorial governments be organized without slavery restrictions, and that abolition be defeated in the District. The fight then moved to the floor of Congress.

In the meantime Alexander Stephens was losing hope. He and Toombs had reached the conclusion that their efforts in behalf of President Taylor's nomination were turning into a boomerang. A Whig emulating the Democrats and adopting the spoils system in making his appointments! Stephens was distressed and profoundly shocked. On February sixth, in writing to urge J. J. Crittenden to accept a post in Taylor's Cabinet, he had expressed the fear that the President was about to be assailed by those who viewed politics merely as spoils. Stalwart men could not evade responsibility at such a time.

Soon he saw the first materialization of his fears. The President was not only attacked by the leeches, whom he put in office to displace good men, but was being influenced by the abolitionists. Without a party and without a president, Stephens felt like a passenger whose sturdy ship had met disaster. There was nothing to which he could hold. On February tenth he wrote Linton that the political situation augured anarchy. "I see no prospect of a continuance of this union long. . . . If we had virtue and patriotism

among our people, I should hope much from a Southern confederacy." He had become convinced, however, that the leaders in his own section could not be trusted. And again three days later to James Thomas: "What is to be the result of the slavery question I can not tell. I suppose, however, that some adjustment of it will be made—some adjustment of it for the present. But when I look to the future and consider the causes of the existing sectional discontent, their extent and nature, I must confess that I see very little prospect of peace and quiet in the public mind upon this subject. Whether a separation of the Union and the organization and establishment of a Southern confederacy will give final and ultimate security to the form of society as it exists with us, I am not prepared to say." There was too much dogmatism in the country, he thought, too little statesmanship.

The debates in Congress had become more and more bitter. Tongues lashed out acrimony and invective. There were several fist-fights between members. It was inevitable that Stephens's health should break under the strain. On March twenty-second Toombs wrote Linton that Aleck had been ill for the last fortnight. Two days later, however, from his couch Aleck was taking his mind off affairs of state to send his permission for his cook to marry a negro who belonged to a neighbor. "Tell Eliza to go to Solomon & Henry's," he directed Linton, "and get a wedding dress, including a fine pair of shoes, etc., and to have a decent wedding of it. Let them cook a supper and have such of their friends as they wish. Let the wedding come off when you are at home so that you can keep order among them. Buy a pig, and let them have a good supper. Let Eliza bake a pound cake and set a good wedding supper."

Aleck was always homesick when he thought of the simple folk at Liberty Hall. After all, why had ambition driven him to Washington, where so little could be accomplished

for the public good? He recalled that the jonquils were even then blooming in yellow blazes about his pleasant side piazza. Rio, the dog who loved him, was probably still meeting the incoming trains, hoping that one would bring his master back to Liberty Hall. Eliza, faithful Eliza, now about to be married to Googer's Harry! There was no food in Washington quite so good as that prepared by his own dusky cook. Eliza knew how to cater to an invalid's whimsical appetite. He longed for the sweet smell of the Georgian spring. The soft earth was falling back from his negroes' plow blades. He wanted to occupy his own comfortable chair on the piazza where he could see and smell and feel the sweetness of March. Years ago Jefferies had been unable to lure him away from Crawfordville. Why had he not resisted the ambition that had sent him first to the state legislature and then to Washington? With nostalgia heavy upon him, he could not analyze the mingled motives that had actuated his life. He knew, however, that as much as he loved Crawfordville, he could not have been content to remain an inconspicuous citizen in the friendly village. When he was ill, he longed more than ever for the comfort of the bedroom he had furnished according to his own tastes. He could close his eyes and see it all—the fire burning cheerily, the low French bed draped in white, the cot for the waiting boy, who always slept near his master, the bedside table, where stood his pair of reading lamps and his watch stand, the shelves that contained the books that he loved best, his littered writing table no one was permitted to touch lest some valuable paper be destroyed. There was peace at Liberty Hall, contrasting painfully with the strife in the capital. Years ago he had often been lonely in Crawfordville. Now, however, Linton was there—not a callow boy whom one must train from day to day, but a man with whom the older brother could converse upon topics that interested him. Linton was a bit of handiwork of which

Aleck was proud. The boy was not only succeeding at the law in partnership with young Byrd, whom also Stephens had educated, but in 1849 he had been elected by Taliaferro County a member of the state legislature. It was hard to be separated from the person one loved best of all others in the world!

The moods of depression, however, did not last. Alexander Stephens frequently admitted that they were induced entirely by illness. "As to my health," he wrote Linton toward the end of March, "I am *in statu quo*—perfectly well except that disease which Alfriend calls urticaria and which Whiting calls eczema, and which I call the mange." Yet toward the middle of April: "I feel less interest in politics than I ever did in my life. I don't think, if I should live many a year to come, that I should ever again feel any deep interest in the success of any ticket upon mere party considerations. The principles in issue, and not the men before me combined, shall always hereafter control my vote upon all elections. All parties are corrupt, and all party organizations are kept up by bad men for corrupt purposes. I shall hereafter treat all alike. I am out of party. I have been very much pained lately at seeing the course of men that I once thought so well of and for whose elevation to office I strove so hard. . . .

"Taylor is pure and honest; his impulses are right, but he suffers his own judgment to be controlled by others. . . . The blunder he made was letting himself be duped and influenced by Seward."

Stephens thought he had detected the scheme to turn the Whigs into the anti-slavery party. He knew, moreover, that there were powerful forces at work on the part of Clay's enemies to prejudice the President against the compromise measures. The Cabinet could not be trusted. Clayton, for instance, who was always plausible, seemed a thoroughly dangerous person. The man promised anything,

and did nothing, he complained to Linton. It was impossible for him to keep a secret: he told everything that happened in Cabinet meetings and a great many things that never happened at all.

Wrangling—wrangling—wrangling day after day! Would there never be a way out of the muddle? For Stephens, however, there was escape in letters to Linton. With pen in hand he could put his philosophy on paper. Writing was vastly more pleasant than his afternoon rambles about Washington, where he was constantly seeing things to distress him. He passed the jail—"that doubtful evidence of civilization where the innocent are often crowded with the guilty. . . . The world's justice is a great farce—no, a dark tragedy. . . . I never see a poor wretch peeping through the iron grates without thinking that if all mankind who have done nothing worse than he were in similar places, there would be, in all probability, but few at large. The poor wretches who are punished, even when guilty, are only the scapegoats; the great villains are at large."

All about Congress Stephens was seeing them day after day. He was returning to the misanthropy of his earlier days. Yet only in those letters to Linton did he give expression to his cynicism. Outwardly he was still the genial companion with the ready joke at the tip of his tongue. He and Toombs continued the center of a jovial group of congressmen who represented the vast diversity of opinion at the time.

Necessity to sit for a photograph did not add to Stephens's small store of cheerfulness. His unmanly appearance always distressed him—particularly when he saw it staring out from a piece of cardboard in his hand. Yet, if one is in public life, one has to have pictures for the press. Early in May he endured the ordeal. The result was appalling. "The most detestable looking thing it is," he wrote Linton when the finished product was delivered to him. "The consolation I

have is that all my friends say it is no likeness at all." Always what other people said had power to give him pain or pleasure.

June saw the culmination of the long struggle. Northern members of Congress, asked in debate if they would ever vote for the admission of slave states, refused to say they would. On the fifteenth of the month Robert Toombs made a brilliant and startling speech. If the North deprived the South of just participation in the common territory, he would look upon the government as alien and hostile and would strike for independence. The House was shocked, then frenzied. Alexander Stephens was profoundly alarmed. It was like Toombs to throw down the gauntlet boldly, but was he wise in so doing? How was it possible to know wisdom from folly when minds were not functioning normally?

Men's tongues seemed to have no direct connections with their brains. The newspapers were so full of lies and misrepresentations that Stephens was kept in a state of constant uneasiness. Soon the President was reported ill. Then it was that the *Baltimore Clipper* accused Stephens and Toombs of calling to intimidate the dying man, threatening that unless he aided the pro-slavery cause, they would see that the House censored him for his participation in the settlement of the Galphin claim. Though Stephens rushed into print with a denial that he had visited the President during his illness, the report continued to be circulated. He would have been doubly disturbed, interested as he was in the place he was later to occupy in history, could he have known that chroniclers of the period would continue to use the newspaper report and not his correction as their source material.

In the light of his conviction that the Galphin claim was just, the story of his holding it over the President's head Stephens thought particularly absurd. He had gone to the

bottom of the matter to reach his conclusion. In 1773 the Cherokee Indians, then in debt, made a treaty ceding two million five hundred thousand acres to Great Britain, by which the crown was to satisfy the Indians' debt. The sum due George Galphin, one of the creditors, amounted to nine hundred and seventy-nine pounds, fifteen shillings, and five pence. In 1775, after the debt was certified by commissioners, Georgia took the land and gave it as a bounty to the soldiers. In 1780 Georgia passed an act binding herself to pay those Indian claimants who had been true to their country the full amount plus six per cent. interest. Galphin's patriotism was duly established. Yet for the want of money the debt had not been paid. In 1790 the federal government assumed the debts that the states had incurred during the Revolutionary War for purposes of defense. Accordingly, Georgia referred the Galphin claim to the national authorities. In 1848 the principal had been paid. The interest, which in the meantime had grown into a sum larger than the original debt, was settled during Taylor's administration. Politics had been responsible for the report that a gigantic swindle had been perpetrated upon the government. Since a large amount of the money went to Crawford, of Georgia, who was then secretary of war, the story was not without plausibility. Crawford's interest, however, antedated his secretaryship. Since the claim was allowed by the Attorney-General and paid by the Secretary of the Treasury, his finger was not in the settlement.

Through it all Stephens had freely expressed his endorsement. Three years later, when misunderstanding was still current, he had the opportunity in a public address to explain the history of the claim in such a way that criticism was silenced. In 1850, however, the public mind was in no condition to enter into logic, research or justice. Therefore Stephens knew that many people thought that he had been guilty of threatening Taylor on the poor man's death-bed

and, unlike the independent Toombs, was much disturbed.

After Taylor's funeral Congress turned again to consideration of the compromise measures. Clay's omnibus bill, now divided into its several parts, was passed by September sixteenth. Stephens was content. He knew that the passage of the compromises was due largely to the support of northern Democrats and southern Whigs. In the bills, however, he knew also that there were bitter pills for the South to swallow. Weary though he was, he hurried home to try to quiet his restless Georgians. He believed in the compromises and had voted for them. He would make his constituents see that the South had gained more than it had lost.

In his state he found such an upheaval as no sane man could have anticipated. Parties were disrupted; people did not know to what leadership they should look. In Nashville the Democratic Party had met in convention, with McDonald, of Georgia, presiding, had repudiated the compromises and had appealed to the states to provide for joint conventions clothed with power to restore the rights of the South within the Union if possible and if not to provide for "safety and independence." Unless something sane was speedily brought to pass, war seemed inevitable.

During the fall Stephens traveled three thousand miles over the state. The hot-headed southerners were more bitterly opposed to the compromises than he had believed possible. It was distressing to see the impetus that had been given the secession movement. Over and over he told his audiences that the admission of California as a free state, when its people so desired it, was no just ground for complaint. According to the terms by which territorial governments had been established in Utah and New Mexico, the South, he tried to prove, had recovered the principle lost by the Missouri Compromise, which had arbitrarily taken the question of slavery out of the hands of the states. He

was pleading for peace and the Union before an unreasonable people. "Give us the line of 36-30 or fight," interrupted a man in Green County. "My friend," Stephens replied, "we have already secured the line of forty-nine degrees, or twelve and a half degrees more than you ask, and without a fight; are you content, or do you want a fight anyhow?"

Though discouraged at times, Stephens plugged on. He had begun to feel that the responsibility for preserving the country that he loved rested upon his own slender shoulders. The immediate issue was the election of delegates to the Georgia state convention. At last he realized that Union men had been chosen, he among the number.

At the convention Charles J. Jenkins, a native of South Carolina who had moved to Georgia in 1816 and who since 1830 had been prominently identified with the state-rights group, having been for fourteen consecutive years a member of the General Assembly, was appointed chairman of a committee to frame the Georgia platform. Stephens served with him. The platform that resulted was the embodiment of Little Aleck's thought. It declared that the Union was secondary only to the principles it was designed to perpetuate; that the South would do well to yield somewhat for the perpetuation of the Union; that, while not entirely approving all the details of the compromise, the state should abide by the whole as permanent settlement of the sectional controversy; that Georgia should resist disruption of the ties that bound her to the Union; and that it was the belief of the convention that upon faithful execution of the fugitive slave bill the preservation of the Union depended.

Dissatisfied with both Whigs and Democrats, Stephens had been laying plans for organizing a party of his own, the dual purpose of which would be to safeguard state rights and at the same time to hold the country together. During the convention he saw the materialization of his scheme in the

establishment of the Constitutional-Union Party, which nominated Howell Cobb for governor. Alexander Stephens was beginning to believe that perhaps after all peace was possible. Everything depended on the success of the new party. The leaders among the Whigs and Democrats in Georgia had at last been united in the common cause. Cobb, who had forsaken the party that had formerly elevated him to the speakership of the House of Representatives, and Stephens and Toombs, who were responsible for the election of a Whig president, were working together with the single objective of preserving state rights within the Union.

Alexander Stephens in the weeks that he remained in Georgia concentrated upon the gubernatorial campaign. He spoke through the length and breadth of the state and be-times wrote long and detailed letters to Cobb, full of advice that concerned the conduct of the canvass. "Show that the settlement is better than fourteen slave states asked," he admonished. Cobb must be sure to turn the argument against the revolutionary movement in South Carolina and to urge the citizens to stand by the supremacy of the law. He must not fail to plant himself against the factionists in South Carolina, and above all things, he must treat the right of secession as an abstract question. Foreseeing the consequences of the slightest misstep, Stephens wanted to keep the situation in hand. Yet in Howell Cobb's leadership, he had confidence. In the days when Cobb had remained a staunch Democrat Stephens had trusted and respected him. Still, consecrated as he was to the interest of his country and his state, he was breathless in his desire to sail calmly through the stormy waters.

Toward the end of August, 1851, the heat of the campaign, blending with the rays of the Georgian sun, prostrated the little invalid. In place of the nagging dyspepsia, other ailments had come. Attacks of nephritic calculi were frequent and distressing. Yet on September first he wrote

Howell Cobb that, feeble though he was, he could now walk without assistance and that he would fill the engagements that extended to election day. It never could be said that Alexander Stephens was a quarter horse: he would see a race to its finish, though he might fall dead when the goal was reached.

Howell Cobb, candidate upon Stephens's Constitutional-Union ticket, was elected governor of Georgia; Stephens was returned to Congress; and Toombs was made a senator. Perhaps the nation could be persuaded to lay aside partizan politics and be saved after all. In Georgia Stephens, Toombs and Cobb had turned the tide against disunion.

It was a small matter, of course, and yet one that gave to its author a degree of satisfaction: in 1851 with all the larger issues that engrossed him Stephens suggested that the congressional year, in order to coincide with the inauguration of the incoming president, begin at noon, March fourth, instead of at midnight, March third, and he saw the launching of the new custom that was destined to become permanent.

Among friends and foes in Congress Stephens was still the genial companion, the excellent raconteur. Many of his stories were at his own expense. During the heated canvass of the preceding fall, he was riding on a train when a man ran out and announced that Aleck Stephens was aboard. Curious people rushed in to see the fighting congressman. "Point him out to me," cried one old man, who, when his request had been granted, raised his hands and exclaimed eloquently, "Good Lord!"

"The old fellow," Stephens added when telling the story, "was like a man I met in Cherokee in 1843, who came up to me after I had spoken and said, 'Well, if I had been put in the road to shoot a smart man, you would have passed safe, sure.'"

CHAPTER XI

THE WHIP AND SPUR TO NEBRASKA

THE summer of 1851—another presidential campaign in the offing! Alexander Stephens had become a man without a party. On the first of June the Democrats met in Baltimore and nominated Franklin Pierce, of New Hampshire, and William R. King, of Alabama. Two weeks later the Whigs placed General Winfield Scott and William A. Graham in the running. After the schismatic declarations the Democrats had made in Nashville, Stephens had no desire to align himself with their party. It was equally impossible to return to Whiggery. Now avowedly Free-Soilers, the northern Whigs were identified with efforts to nullify the fugitive slave law, which seemed to Stephens to constitute the most important part of the compromise measures. They made no protest when mobs prevented the capture of slaves. They had been responsible in many states for the passage of the personal liberty bills which, by intercepting the action of the state courts, rendered the law, within their limits, null and void. Stephens was incensed because of the apparent violation of the Constitution. He had staunchly opposed the South Carolina nullifiers of many years before. He was consistent in recognizing no higher temporal law than the Constitution of his country. In April the Constitutional-Union Party of Georgia had resolved to endorse no candidate who did not recognize the compromise measures as a final settlement of the sectional disputes. When General Scott maintained silence on the subject, they declared for a ticket of their own, headed by Daniel Webster, who in 1850 had come out strongly in favor of the compromises. Defi-

nately severed from the party to which he had adhered so long, Alexander Stephens stated in the *National Intelligencer* his reasons for not supporting Scott: the Whig candidate had not espoused the principles of the manifesto, declaring for non-interference with slavery in the territories, drawn by Stephens, and signed by more than forty leaders in both houses; he had not expressed himself as favorable to the compromises; and, furthermore, he "had suffered his name to be held up as candidate in Pennsylvania and Ohio by the open and avowed enemies of the compromise measures."

The year before, Stephens had written prophetically to Howell Cobb, declaring it to be his belief that the Whig Party as a national organization was dead. Now he was engaged in the melancholy task of throwing sod upon the coffin that held the remains of his old love. His letter in the *Intelligencer* was not the only one in which he opposed General Scott's candidacy. A few days after the nomination in the Whig Convention he wrote the *Chronicle and Sentinel* of Augusta his opinion that Scott's note of acceptance had fallen far short of the South's expectations. It should be clear to all discerning minds, he added, that Scott was the candidate of the Free-Soil Whigs and that, as such, he was unworthy of support in the South. Yet it was not without sadness that Stephens helped to bury the party in whose behalf he had waged many a gallant fight.

He knew, however, that his support of Daniel Webster was merely a gesture, for all his and Toombs's efforts to give national scope to the Constitutional-Unionists had been futile. Party leaders among both Whigs and Democrats were far more interested in the spoils that nurtured them than they were in saving the country from destruction. Indeed, early in the year he had come to see that he was waging a losing fight. Yet doggedly he continued to preach his doctrine of constitutional liberty within the Union. Speaking in Baltimore on George Washington's birthday,

he made an eloquent plea for a return to Jeffersonian principles. The last words of the address epitomized the message that he still half hoped the people would hear—"Our country, our whole country, and nothing but our country! May her progress be onward and upward!" Yet, from his letters it is clear that while he prayed that the mountain of opposition be removed, he had lost his faith in miracles. The philosophy that sustained him through the dark days expressed itself in an address delivered that year to the students of Emory College. Success in life, he said, was dependent upon self-knowledge; upon integrity of principle; upon a fixity of purpose that would mold a man into the sort of character he desired to achieve; and upon energy that was never allowed to lag. The tenets set forth in that speech were the ones that had guided Alexander Stephens since the first days of his mental awareness. Principle must never be sacrificed upon the altar of expediency.

Even though Daniel Webster died shortly before the election, Stephens marked his name upon the ballot, believing that a lost vote was preferable to a vote cast for a party he did not trust. Since he had utterly broken with the Whigs, however, there was perhaps some satisfaction in the realization that his card in the *Intelligencer* served to disrupt the party that had proved false to the faith he had placed in it, to defeat Scott, and to elect Franklin Pierce, who to a southerner must have seemed the lesser of the two evils.

It is no small wonder that melancholy again crept into Stephens's thinking and that the old minor note once more found its way into his letters. His own future and the future of his country were obscured by impenetrable clouds. What was more devastating, yet never to be admitted, he was lonelier than he had ever been before—Linton Stephens, whom he loved more, he thought, than any man had ever loved a brother and more than most men love their sons,

had married. It could never be quite the same between Aleck and Linton—not that the younger man would love the older less but merely that some one else now must come first with him, while he would continue first with Aleck. Still, the new sister-in-law was all that one could desire. A widow she was: Mrs. Emmeline Bell, beautiful, and—as the daughter of his friend, James Thomas, of Hancock—well born. Linton moved from Crawfordville to Sparta, became the law partner of Richard Johnston, and established a life apart from the brother who through the years had counseled him. Henceforth the relationship must be somewhat changed.

In Washington Alexander Stephens awaited Pierce's inaugural with interest. On February twenty-second he wrote James Thomas, "Mr. Pierce is here. He keeps secluded. I am much pleased with his conduct so far. How I shall like his cabinet I do not know until I know who it is. But I fear he has not the nerve to stand up against the great Democratic party clamor of those who force themselves upon him. If he were a man of stern nature and principle he might do a great service to the country. I hope for the best but fear the worst. I shall give him a fair trial. I shall not factiously oppose him."

Soon, along with the rest of the country, Stephens found himself attracted to the handsome young President. In his personality Pierce had power to draw men toward him. There had never been a more impressive inaugural address than the one delivered on the fourth of March, 1853, from the east portico of the Capitol. Snow fell upon the vast audience and obscured the tall straight figure of the speaker. The voice, however, rang clear and full through the cold air. Using neither manuscript nor notes, Franklin Pierce delivered a carefully prepared literary address. From a protected place Alexander Stephens listened. He could not approve all that was said. Yet he could not withstand the

magnetism of the man. "The policy of my administration will not be controlled by any timid foreboding of evil from expansion." (He was vindicating his party's policy toward Mexico and Texas. Well, be that as it may, the errors that had been made were now past history. There was no reason to continue to oppose a war that had already ended in victory.) "Indeed, it is not to be disguised that our attitude as a nation, and our position on the globe, render the acquisition of certain possessions, not within our jurisdiction, eminently appropriate for protection." (He was referring to Cuba, of course. Stephens had no objection to the annexation of Cuba if the result could be honorably accomplished.)

While Pierce went on to affirm the principle of the Monroe Doctrine, Stephens applauded. Though he might not approve the intimation that Whigs in office would be replaced by Democrats, Stephens knew that the spoils system was too solidly entrenched to be speedily wiped away. "I acknowledge," Pierce said, "my obligations to the masses of my country men, and to them alone." Stephens's high treble joined in the shouts when Pierce urged the preservation of the Union and spoke in behalf of the compromises of 1850 which should "unhesitatingly be carried into effect."

During the tumult that marked the close of the address, Alexander Stephens reached his decision. He would line up with Pierce's administration. Though he could not approve all the policies of the Democratic Party, though he could not condone the crimes that had been committed in the past, he had come to believe that his dear South would better be entrusted to Democrats than to Whigs. He would, however, not be blindly partizan. Nor would he place confidence in men. Great issues pressed upon the country. As long as the Democrats seemed more nearly right than the Whigs, he would call himself a Democrat, reserving, however, the privilege of differing with the party.

During the summer of 1853 the country settled into a calm prosperity that scarcely presaged the storm that was to follow. On the plantations of the South there were peace and plenty. The largest cotton crop ever produced was being marketed at good prices. Never before had sugar yielded such rich returns. Railroads were being built. A deluded people believed that the specter of civil war had departed never to return.

Alexander Stephens, however, was confined to his bed in Crawfordville. On June ninth he had sustained a broken collar-bone, a crushed elbow and a gash on his head when a train in which he was riding had been derailed near Macon. Railroad accidents, the encounter with an irate judge who towered above him with deadly dirk knife in his hand, in addition to the ailments by which he had always been assailed! Yet during the summer Stephens read a great deal, did some writing with his crippled hand and dictated frequently to an amanuensis. By early fall the bones and gashes had healed. Then came a recurrence of an old malady. He knew that his friends did not expect him to live. According to the physicians, another abscess of the liver had developed. Again his frequent expectorations were said to be brought about by the drainage that was accomplished through the lungs. Nevertheless, he rallied in time to return to Washington in December.

Soon after the thirty-third Congress convened, hell broke loose again. Leaders were losing confidence in the President, who at the moment of his inaugural address had been the most popular man in the country. Stephens's fear, expressed in the letter to James Thomas, that Pierce lacked the stamina needed at so critical a time, reasserted itself. Always charming and urbane, he was proving vacillating on important questions. Men accused him of making up his mind in the morning and changing it in the afternoon. Over and over he made conflicting promises that could never be

kept. The South began to fear that the influence of Van Buren was turning the President toward the abolitionists.

Scarcely had congressmen settled comfortably in their seats when a bill was introduced for organizing a territorial government in Nebraska. In the Senate the matter was referred to the committee on territories, of which Stephen A. Douglas, of Illinois, was chairman. By enunciating a new doctrine, distressingly controversial, Douglas's report reopened the question of slavery, which the people had hoped the compromise had settled for ever. "Squatter sovereignty," the name by which the new doctrine was called, held that "the Constitution of the United States secures to every citizen an inalienable right to move into any of the territories with his property, of whatever kind and description, and to hold and enjoy the same under sanction of law." Though the Missouri Compromise had been thought for ever to prohibit slavery in Nebraska, which lay above the line of 36° 30' north latitude, Douglas proposed to leave the decision to the citizens of the territories. Again the fight was on. Men formed quickly into the line of battle. Sumner, of Massachusetts, presented a memorial, declaring that the Missouri line was a sacred pledge. The Nebraska bill was expanded to include the organization of a territorial government for Kansas also. Lightning flashed through the corridors of the Capitol. Thunder rumbled from the plains of the West to the borders of New England and through the plantations of the far South. "Better that Congress should break up in wild disorder," wrote Horace Greeley in the *New York Tribune*, "nay better that the capitol itself should blaze by the torch of the incendiary, or fall and bury all its inmates beneath the crumbling ruins, than that this perfidy and wrong should finally be accomplished."

Still, by Douglas's strategy the Kansas-Nebraska Bill passed the Senate. In the House Alexander Stephens was

ready to render all the assistance within his power. On February 17, 1854, he took the floor to answer Meacham, of Vermont, who had argued that the bill abrogated the Missouri Compromise, which was a sacred compact adhered to for thirty years, and that such a breach of faith would be attended by disaster. In the argument Alexander Stephens was entirely at home. There was no man who had made a more thorough study than he of the history of the country. The Missouri Compromise a sacred compact! His frail body shook with indignation. The compromise, nothing more than a compact between Missouri and the government, had never been agreeable to the South. It had merely been accepted at the time in lieu of something better. Certainly the North had not deemed it inviolate. As early as 1836 the North had fought the admission of Arkansas as a slave state though it lay below the famous 36-30 line. "The gentleman spoke of honor," Stephens cried disdainfully. "I thank thee, Jew, for teaching me that word!" Yet every delegate from his state of Vermont had voted against the admission of Arkansas. The majority of the northern representatives had opposed the admission of Texas as a slave state, despite the sacred quality of the Missouri Compromise. He pointed out that when a bill to organize the government for Oregon had come up in 1847, with the anti-slavery provision, Burt, of South Carolina, in order to take the sense of the North concerning the 36-30 line, had moved to insert the clause "inasmuch as the whole of the said territory lies north of 36-30 north latitude known as the line of the Missouri Compromise"; yet only seven northerners had voted for the amendment. Effectively Stephens piled up instances to show that long ago the Missouri Compromise had been abrogated—not by the South but by the North who now prated of the sacred obligations it imposed upon Congress. "I do not know what you call me or how you class me, whether a Whig or a Democrat,

in your political vocabulary," he concluded eloquently. "Principles should characterize parties, not names."

The effect of the Kansas-Nebraska speech was nationwide. Papers throughout the country carried a detailed report of the arguments and word pictures of the man who had held the attention of friends and opponents of the bill. A correspondent in the *Pennsylvanian* wrote:

"Mr. Stephens is slightly above medium height, and painfully thin in appearance. His head is small and flat; his forehead low, and partially covered with straight, dark, lustre-lacking hair; and his cheeks thin, wrinkled, and of parchment texture. His walk, his features, his figure, bespeak great physical emaciation. You look in vain for some outward manifestation of that towering, commanding intellect which has held the congregated talent of the country spell-bound for hours . . . but still you feel convinced that the feeble, tottering being before you is all brain—brain in the head, brain in the arms, brain in the legs, brain in the body—that the whole man is charged and surcharged with electricity of intellect, that a touch would bring forth the divine spark."

On the twenty-first of March the bill came up in order, was referred to the committee on territories, and later returned with amendments that befogged the issue. Several times its opponents were hopeful that it would come to a vote. Stephens was doing his best to create public sentiment in its favor. On May seventh he wrote to W. W. Burrell, editor of *The Southern Quarterly Review*:

"Tomorrow I think we shall get a vote on the Kansas-Nebraska Bill. . . . Anything that you may feel disposed to say favorable to the measure will be very timely this week. . . . The moral effect of the victory on our side will have a permanent effect on the public mind. . . . The Clayton amendment will be dropt. This will be the ground upon which Southern defectionists will attempt to justify their

alliance with the free soilers. It will be only a pretext, and they should not be permitted to escape on it. The great question for the South is whether she can be in a worse condition than she now is with the 'flaming sword' of a public act denying her entrance into the territory on any condition or the votes of anybody."

On the second day of May Stephens, with the idea of cutting off all amendments, moved to strike out the enacting clause of the bill and have it reported to the House so that a vote might be taken. "After a most exciting contest," wrote Baker in his *Memoirs of Seward*, "lasting nearly two months, Mr. Alexander H. Stephens of Georgia by an extraordinary stratagem in parliamentary tactics succeeded in closing debate and bringing the bill to a vote in the House." It was almost midnight when the vote was taken. The bill passed with one hundred and thirteen ayes to one hundred noes. Before he retired Alexander Stephens scribbled a note to Linton: "Nebraska is through the House—majority thirteen. . . . I took the reins in my hand, applied the whip and spur, and brought the wagon out at eleven p.m. Glory enough for one day!"

Alexander Stephens was not thinking of the possible results of the legislation he was supporting. For him it was always enough to be satisfied in his own mind that he was right. The intrinsic act was of importance paramount to the consequences. For years he had believed the Missouri Compromise to be unconstitutional and therefore wrong. After it had been disregarded by Congress and after the North had refused to abide by her own bargain, there was poetic justice in defeating this belated attempt to declare it sacred. He was arguing for the principle in which he believed, whatever might be the result. When he declared that under the popular sovereignty plan the free states would have an immense advantage over the slave states, because of their larger population and the likelihood

of greater immigration therefrom into the territories, he was speaking sincerely. It was the same Stephens who had argued against his right to a seat in Congress back in 1843. It was the same Stephens who voted for the admission of free states, the Stephens who opposed the War with Mexico, the Stephens who saw the justice of England's claims in Oregon, the Stephens who later opposed the policies of the President of the Confederacy. Expediency figured not at all in his reasoning. His conception of right was the only guidance that he knew how to follow. Even though he may have later realized that the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill caused the formation of the Republican Party on the principle of no extension of slavery, led to the downfall of the Democrats, and made the Civil War inevitable, he entertained no regrets, for he had acted according to the dictates of his own mind—the only guidance that he ever recognized.

CHAPTER XII

DISTANT RUMBLINGS

SUMMER again in Crawfordville! Alexander Stephens wondered why the people complained of the heat. It was the cold of winter that he dreaded, never the rays of the summer sun. On his side piazza he was happy and at peace. There was not an evening that he did not send Harry or one of the colored boys to bring him a shawl. Even beneath the oil lamp he was comfortable when playing whist with whoever happened to be passing the night at Liberty Hall. Linton came frequently from Sparta to be with him and sometimes brought Emm and the baby. Each day guests arrived, for whom Eliza set places about her bountiful table. Yes, it was good to be at home. Over and over Aleck was amazed that politics drew him with its irresistible magnetism. He did not admit even to himself that he derived enjoyment out of the fray or that one of his reasons for liking to be in Crawfordville consisted in the applause the people were giving him for his accomplishments in Washington. He knew, moreover, that the hospitality of his home was immensely pleasing to him and that he liked the visits of the great and the realization that not even a tramp was ever turned away from his door. Far and wide had spread the news of the room he kept for the hoboos, who merely inquired where they could find lodging and were directed at once to Liberty Hall.

Stephens was glad that opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska Bill reached him only through the press. In the South the settlement was pleasing to the people. Nevertheless, he was reading with apprehension the editorials of Horace Greeley

who said that the passage of the bill had made more abolitionists in two months than the northern anti-slavery agitators could have converted in half a century. He realized that much sentiment had been aroused against the enforcement of the fugitive slave law. The extremists in the North were undoubtedly gaining in numbers and in momentum. There would be more trouble when Congress next convened, trouble from persons who believed that slavery was an inhuman institution and that the slaveholder was a fiend who drove his negroes cruelly and relentlessly. Looking about his own plantation, Alexander Stephens was reassured. He was judging the institution by its operation at Liberty Hall, where his negroes were happy and care-free, where Eliza had more help in her work than she needed, where the slaves loved their master and were treated kindly. There was Harry, for instance, with his pocket filled with tips which came liberally from the guests. Robert Toombs scattered coins about the place in a most prodigal fashion. Nothing opened his pocketbook more quickly than Eliza's cooking and the wines and brandies that were served him whenever he stopped the night to talk matters over with his old friend. Harry drove his own dray and made extra money, which his master encouraged him to save. The negro children, romping upon the lawn, were happy through the long summer days. To Alexander Stephens this was slavery as it ought to be, as he had brought himself to believe it must be in all sections of the South.

So the summer passed peacefully, in spite of the distant rumblings. Came corn-shucking time. The negroes gathered from other farms for the annual celebration. The master could hear their merriment rising from the quarters below the house. He knew that they were happy in the abandonment to their tribal dances. He closed his eyes and listened to their songs. According to long established custom, they came at last to the house, between thirty or forty

strong. It occurred to the master to protest, for he knew the corn-shucking custom. The negroes were preparing to carry Marse Aleck on their shoulders in a sort of triumphal march across the fields. "I thought discretion the better part of valor," he wrote to Linton the next day, "and did not resist the 'toting' custom." After all, there was no chance that he would fall from the strong shoulders that bore him aloft. Negroes were like children: one could live peaceably with them only when one joined in their play. The party closed with a grand supper in the quarters. Alexander Stephens could hear the songs and the laughter long after he lay tucked in his French bed.

It was pleasant to realize that old Uncle Ben was at last among the negroes who belonged to the Liberty Hall plantation. The old fellow, whom Stephens had loved back yonder in childhood days upon the Homestead, had asked to be bought by Marse Aleck. The wish had been granted, of course. Indeed, it was the boast of the owner of Liberty Hall that no negro was ever purchased against his will. Googer's Harry, after his marriage to Eliza, had become a Stephens dinky. It was only right that husband and wife should not be separated.

The season in Crawfordville ended all too soon. Washington again—with its discord and its constant rumors of other troubles yet to be. Alexander Stephens was installed at Mrs. Duncan's boarding-house. Among the lodgers was a young man who interested him a great deal—chiefly because he considered worthy of his attention most young men who carried large ideas in their heads. Espey was the fellow's name. He was then employed in the meteorological department of the United States Navy. Yet he was not the sort to stay comfortably located in a niche. A visionary crank people called him, for he had written an outlandish treatise on the philosophy of storms, which he declared might some day make weather forecasting an accurate

science. The other guests at Mrs. Duncan's either made light of the young man's theories or were completely indifferent. Not so in the case of Alexander Stephens, however. He listened to Espey's story and read the book. He learned that *The Philosophy of Storms* had been presented to the American Association of Scientists, who had rejected it. Likewise the Royal Society of London had set aside its findings. The French Academy of Science at Paris, however, had treated it more hospitably. The committee had gone so far as to report favorably upon the contents of the book and to recommend that Espey be placed by the government of the United States "in a position to continue his important investigations and to complete his theory, already so important."

Therefore Espey had been taken into the meteorological department of the Navy. Yet, because of limited funds, his work was practically at a standstill. Impressed by the young man's book, Stephens insisted that the government should make immediate utilization of the material in his possession. There should be daily telegraphic announcements of weather conditions and daily forecasts, he urged. The appropriation of two thousand dollars a year was not enough, Espey argued. Then another way should be found, Stephens countered. Accordingly, he went himself to the *National Intelligencer* and to the *Union* with the suggestion that short weather reports be secured from different parts of the country and used by way of news. A visit to the telegraph company resulted in the agreement that the communications would be carried without charge. It was not long, therefore, until weather announcements—the first to appear in this or any other country—became a daily feature of the Washington newspapers. "His [Espey's] appropriation," Stephens wrote years later, "was often assailed by members of Congress, but a few of us were able to save it." Alexander Stephens was perfectly sure that he had

been the means of starting a program of national forecasting that would be far-reaching in its beneficial results and that would be steadily of greater significance as more scientific data were available.

Small matters like those involved in the assistance he rendered Espey served for Stephens as antidotes for the distress engendered by the affairs of the nation. Certainly the political skies were dark during the winter of 1854-55. Country-wide opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska Bill had produced an ominous situation. Raymond, then editor of the *New York Times*, and Seward were making a last valiant effort to revive the Whig organization, while they sent through the states propoganda directed toward the proposed repeal of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Men opposed to slavery extension had met on July sixth and had organized themselves into the Republican Party, pledged to secure the repeal of the Fugitive Slave and Kansas-Nebraska Acts and to the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. And another party, self-styled the Americans but derisively called the Know-Nothings, had sprung into being and had made itself felt in the fall elections. Alexander Stephens looked with enmity upon both the new political organizations.

The Know-Nothings were a secret order built upon distrust of Catholicism. When, soon after bishops and other members of the clergy had tried to bring about the exclusion of the Bible from the public schools, a papal nuncio arrived in America to settle a dispute that had arisen in Buffalo concerning property alleged to belong to the Church, excitement had run high. The growth of the foreign vote was also viewed as a menace. So the Know-Nothings banded themselves together to wage war against French infidelity, German socialism and skepticism, and the papacy. Alexander Stephens opposed the entire movement. The crusade against the Catholics he considered a violation of the Ameri-

can Constitution. The campaign against foreign-born citizens he thought unjust and illogical. When news came to him through letters from Linton that the Know-Nothings were gaining ground in Georgia, he was angered and distressed. It irked him that he must remain in Washington where he could do little to stem the tide of radicalism. Yet there were important reasons why he was needed in Congress.

The national hysteria, fomented by the wide-spread popularity of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, by the incendiary articles in the press, by the activities of the Emigrant Aid Society of New England that was sending settlers into Kansas, and by the western Missourians, who were rapidly staking off claims for settlers who favored the southern institution, soon found its expression on the floor of the House. When Mace, of Indiana, signified his intention of introducing a bill to restore the Missouri Compromise, Alexander Stephens knew that the time had come for him to speak. On December fourteenth he gained the floor. As usual his argument was carefully prepared. He spoke, however, without notes. It was clear, he said, that Mace had as his objective the abolition of slavery in Kansas and Nebraska. His contention that the recent election had proved public sentiment to be overwhelmingly against the act that had been passed during the last session of Congress was without basis in fact.

"I ask the honorable gentleman from Indiana how he reaches the conclusion that these elections set the seal of the public condemnation upon the friends of the great movement of the last session? I believe, Mr. Chairman, that there was no man more zealous in his opposition to the bill then passed, not even excepting the gentleman from Indiana himself, than yourself, and you will pardon me, sir, the illustration. Even you, sir, from the city of brotherly love, are no longer returned to your seat, which you have filled

with so much ability. Now, I ask the gentleman from Indiana whether that is proof that the people of Philadelphia agree with him and with you, Mr. Chairman? . . . Again, Mr. Chairman, my honorable friend from another district in Pennsylvania, who sits to my right [Mr. Heister], who was quite as zealous in his opposition as you or the gentleman from Indiana, has also been defeated in the canvass for reelection. . . . I have not attempted the *Herculaneum* excavating process of ascertaining the depths to which he has been buried in this popular irruption."

Looking over the assemblage, Alexander Stephens cited man after man who had opposed the Kansas-Nebraska Bill and who would soon be vacating his seat in Congress.

"Mr. Chairman, now let me turn to the state of Illinois. If there is a State north which may be appealed to as one where there was anything like a contest on the question, it was Illinois. And what was the result? There were but three men from that State who voted for the Nebraska bill, and now we have four Nebraska men from Illinois."

Washburne, of Illinois, leaped to his feet, demanding to be told the popular vote of Illinois on the Nebraska question. Stephens replied that the only test vote in the state was taken in the canvass for state treasurer. The Nebraska candidate was elected by a large majority. Mr. Washburne was soon on his feet again, declaring that the man who ran in opposition to the Nebraska candidate was not known in the southern part of the state and accordingly got no vote at all in that section.

"I suppose so!" piped the little Georgian sarcastically, and the laughter in the House was uproarious.

Again Washburne clamored to be heard. He was insisting that if the anti-Nebraska man had been known, he would have been elected by a majority of five or six thousand.

"Well, sir," countered Stephens, "I do not think the people of Illinois could have been exceedingly offended and

outraged by this measure if they did not take the trouble to have their candidates in opposition known."

"I will state to the gentleman," Washburne persisted, "that the candidate regularly nominated declined, and the other candidate was brought out only a short time before the election."

"Then I can only say," retorted Stephens, "that their candidate ran before the popular demonstration got hold of him."

He paused dramatically for the laughter to subside.

"And it only shows," he continued, "that the first candidate saw the handwriting upon the wall, and was more prudent than the last one." Again there was laughter.

Having finally silenced Washburne, Alexander Stephens continued with his speech without further interruptions. The time had come, it seemed to him, for a strong defense of slavery. In the past he had been content in his praise of the institution. Now, however, the activities of the abolitionists had strengthened his belief in slavery. Then, too, he was thinking perhaps of Eliza and Harry and old Uncle Ben, and of all the other happy negroes about Liberty Hall and neighboring plantations.

"Look at the three millions of Africans," he said sincerely, "as you find them in the South and where is the man so cold hearted and so cold blooded as would wish them put in the position that their forefathers were or that their kindred are now in Africa? . . . Again take our negroes and compare them with the free negroes of the North. . . ." Convincingly he backed his generalizations with figures. Between 1840 and 1850 the increase in the population of the free negroes, which included fugitives and slaves that had been recently emancipated as well as additions by birth, amounted to ten and ninety-five hundredths per cent. During the same period the slaves of the South had increased twenty-eight and fifty-eight hundredths per cent. He painted

a beneficent picture of the institution in the South—a picture which was probably accurate in so far as the negroes who belonged to him and to his friends were concerned.

It seems possible, however, that misgivings came now and then to the man who loved liberty and who could not bear to see a prisoner looking from behind iron bars, who certainly must have realized that there were upon the vast plantations of the South overseers who drove slaves like cattle. Surely Stephens could not close his mind and his broad sympathies to the other and darker side of slavery. Indeed, he had come a long way since he told Congress in his speech on the admission of Texas that he did not favor slavery extension into territory where there were no slaves, but that he was merely seeking sanction for an institution that already obtained in the land that was about to be acquired. Yet he was to go still farther in his defense of the institution. As he struggled through the winter he was seized with the sort of depression which in recent years he had been able to overcome. With the approach of Christmas he found no way to dispel the gloom. On December twenty-fourth he wrote Linton that he feared he would never see another Christmas. "It is often a matter of thought and reflection to me, when friends have left my room whom I have kept in a roar of laughter, how little do they know of the miserableness of one who has appeared to be in such spirits." He told himself that his unhappiness was caused by the lack of sympathy of those about him. Perhaps beneath the surface of his consciousness he was for ever doubting the rightness of the stand he had taken. "I find no unison of feelings, tastes, and sentiments with the world," he wrote, without realizing doubtless that thoughts far beneath the superstructure built by his reasoning were clamoring for expression.

There were gay occasions, however, when the genial statesman, never in reality a misanthrope, was at his best.

He joined with Mr. and Mrs. Toombs in tendering a dinner to Senator and Mrs. William C. Dawson, of Georgia, who had just been married. The guests were Governor and Mrs. Pratt, Governor and Mrs. Brown; Mr. Hilliard, of Alabama; Doctor Reese, of Georgia; Colonel Hardee, of the United States Army; Judge Wayne and Mr. Pearce, of Maryland; and Mr. and Mrs. Badger. Every one was in excellent spirits, proving in his own way that all the world loves a lover and envies a bride and groom. Healths were drunk to Senator Dawson and to Mrs. Dawson.

"Now a toast to the bachelor," said Badger, "to our friend Aleck Stephens!"

The guests lifted their glasses and waited.

"When Lafayette was in America," Badger continued, "he inquired of the first man he met at a dinner, 'Sir, are you married?' When the reply was in the affirmative, 'Lucky dog!' said Lafayette. To his next inquiry came a negative answer. 'Lucky dog!' said Lafayette again. So we drink to Aleck Stephens, the lucky dog!"

The glasses were drained. The guests laughingly waited for the response. Stephens rose to his feet.

"I know nothing of the mysteries of the happy man's case," he said. "I can only reply in the language of a Western lawyer who concluded his argument by saying, 'May it please your honor, I know nothing of the mysteries of the law in this case, and my only reliance is to trust to the sublimity of luck and float on the surface of the occasion.'"

As Alexander Stephens took his seat, it was gratifying to realize that he had handled the pleasantries well. Like his friend Lincoln, of Illinois, he was always rescued by one of his stories. That night he confided to Linton how well he thought he had acquitted himself. It was always comforting to brag a little in those letters to Linton, who could never entirely misunderstand!

There could be no doubt that Stephens needed such re-

laxation as the dinner for the Dawsons provided, for in Congress there was no abatement of the strain under which he was working. His speech of December fourteenth, in which he had laid great claim to advancement in the South under the institution of slavery, brought forth a reply from Campbell, of Ohio, who had compared his own state to Georgia in an effort to show that progress was more rapid where free labor was employed. Stephens was at once on his mettle. Day and night he searched for statistical proof of his contentions. While he knew that figures do not lie, he must also have known that figurers can handle them to their own sophistical uses. He had set himself the task of defending the South. The performance would be the best of which he was capable—a consummation which he had faith to believe would be good. January fifteenth had been set as the date upon which he would make reply to Mr. Campbell. It was no small gratification to see that the floor and the galleries were filled when he entered to take his seat. Washington had learned that whenever Stephens spoke the entertainment would be good. A correspondent of the *Macon Messenger* said that the occasion reminded the old inhabitants of the times of Clay, Calhoun and Webster. The figures that Stephens had compiled were astounding, chosen as they were for purposes of proof. There was volume in the high shrill voice. The audience leaned forward in the gallery, intent upon every word. The representatives were quiet. There was no rustling of paper. There were no whispered conferences among members. Stephens's quick wit was equal to Mr. Campbell's interruptions. The audience, under the spell of the orator, agreed that the little Georgian had worsted his opponent. "While he spoke," wrote a correspondent of the *Frederick Citizen*, "his eyes glowed like living coals. . . . You cease to be annoyed by that voice that pierces the ear with its shrill and discordant notes, and the awkward gestures seem

awkward no longer, for they are evidently prompted by nature." The man looked like "intellect incarnate," he added.

Later when John C. Rives, of the *Congressional Globe*, asked Stephens if he did not think it would be well to revise the figures before they were published, the author of the manuscript notes replied that he was never mistaken about a matter to which he had given careful study. When the speech was printed, no error was found. In the selection, moreover, Stephens had exercised the utmost care.

Linton, however, made bold to advance a criticism. His brother, he thought, had been a trifle out of taste when he had said that his record was for all time. That was the sort of assertion to leave for others to make. Yet he added his opinion that the speech had advanced new ideas unsurpassed by any similar address in the history of oratory. Alexander Stephens was merely thinking aloud when he spoke of the permanent quality of his work. He had come to see himself as a force in the making of government.

Despite all his earnest efforts, however, Stephens was at last reaching the conclusion that the cause of the South was hopeless. The growth of the Know-Nothings was to him a constant source of discouragement. What hope was there for a country that would yield to such leadership as was now to be found in all the Southern States? What was the use of an honest man's battling against ignorance and corruption? As winter merged into the first days of spring, he reached his decision: he would not run again. During the years before he entered Congress he had made a great deal of money. In spite of all he had spent for the education of young men, in spite of the extravagant manner of his living and all the charities that had been his, he had amassed in those years twelve thousand dollars. Since that time he had earned little more than his salary as congressman. Of course when he was not in Washington fees had

come from cases. Yet, because he had made it a custom, from which he allowed himself never to deviate, to accept no money for services while he was employed by the people, he needed more than the amount of his salary. He would again become a private citizen. As soon, however, as he made his decision public, importuning letters poured in on him. His constituents declared that they could not spare him. His comrades in the House insisted that his place could not be filled by another. Nevertheless, Stephens was for a time obdurate. Then on May fifth came a letter from Thomas W. Thomas that gave him pause. There was the urgent request that Stephens run again. There was also the implication that the people were thinking that he feared the opposition of the Know-Nothings. Thomas begged his friend to make public his opinion of the new party.

So he was being accused of cowardice. That was not a taunt that Little Aleck could brook. All his life he had striven to prove his bravery. Had he not withstood the switch in the hand of O'Cavanaugh? Had he not challenged one man to a duel? Had he not remained unflinching when Cone towered above him, an angry giant with a dirk knife in his hand?

Immediately he sent to Thomas a letter which he was willing to see in print. It was true, he said, that he had been influenced in his decision by the realization that many of his old friends had joined the Know-Nothings. The new party, however, was not for him. Never would he go before the people "with his principles in his pocket." Among his many reasons for opposing the Know-Nothings, their secrecy was foremost. "Hiding places are the natural sources of error." He likened the organization to the first Jacobin clubs in Paris, where legislation was framed in secret meetings. The party did not deny the two objectives generally credited to it, both of which were basically un-American: the crusade against Catholics, and the exclusion of the

foreign-born citizens from politics. Religion and politics should not be mingled. In America a Catholic as a citizen should stand upon his own merits. The history of the country showed that Catholics were the one people who had not warred against American institutions. In throwing down the gauntlet to his new enemies, Stephens did not repeat his decision not to enter the arena in the coming election.

Those who knew him well had no doubt that the die had been cast by Thomas's letter. His formal announcement was made at the City Hall in Augusta. The auditorium was filled to its capacity. As Stephens began to speak, the clamor of the throng outside became more and more insistent. Soon he yielded to entreaty and addressed the people from the steps of the building. He admitted that he had finally thrown his hat into the ring because it had been said that he was afraid of defeat at the hands of the Know-Nothings. "I am afraid of nothing on the earth, or above the earth, or under the earth—except to do wrong. The path of duty I shall ever endeavor to travel, fearing no evil and dreading no consequences. I would rather be defeated in a good cause than triumph in a bad one. . . . I am again a candidate for Congress from this district. My name is hereby presented—not by any convention but by myself. Do with it as each of you may think proper."

He handled the Know-Nothings without mercy. Their proscription of Catholics and foreigners was contrary to every principle which the Revolution of 1776 had established. His defense of Catholicism was eloquent and fearless. Lord Baltimore and the early settlers in Maryland came in for their share of praise, as did Charles Carroll, Catholic signer of the Declaration of Independence. The Know-Nothing movement, essentially revolutionary in character, unless checked, would lead to civil war. The people cheered. When some one wanted to know his party affilia-

tion, "I am toting my own skillet," he replied. He knew that the bitterest campaign of his career had been launched upon stormy waters.

One of the officers on the Know-Nothing craft was a young man about whom Stephens was beginning to hear a great deal. Benjamin H. Hill was his name. Rumor had it that the fellow was striking in bearing and appearance, that he was a fluent speaker and invincible in argument. To Stephens, however, he was a young upstart in execrable company. When he heard that Hill had expressed a wish to meet Stephens in debate, he was amused. Other men had been cured of similar longings. The rope was available. Hill should certainly be permitted to make his own noose.

Stephens was full of confidence. He knew that Georgians did not doubt his ability to handle Hill. Stories of his prowess before audiences were entering into the folk-lore. People had not forgotten, for instance, that in the days when the Whigs were trying to wrest the state from the Democrats a drunken fellow in a meeting that Little Aleck was addressing had kept crying out, "I'm a Dimmy-crat!" Finally in exasperation, Stephens had replied, "My friend, you may be a Dimmy-crat, but if you had a few hickory ribs around your middle, you'd be a dimmy-john." Georgians were anticipating that there would be a good show when Hill and Stephens should occupy the same platform.

The two men met at Lexington, Georgia—the one handsome, vigorous, exuding the arrogance of youth; the other frail in body, strong in mind and certain that he was firmly entrenched in the hearts of his people. Stephens soon saw, however, that the ability of his opponent was not to be discounted. He had met many a man in debate but none more able. The audience, anticipating a good performance, was not disappointed. Afterward there was considerable difference of opinion as to which man got the better of the

argument. Stephens was not happy—Stephens who had always carried off the laurels in debate. After that night he knew that he did not like Ben Hill and that Ben Hill was a man well worth watching. He did watch him, moreover, rather too closely for his own peace of mind.

Disquieting stories reached his ears from time to time. Hill was endeavoring to convey the impression that Stephens had been discomfited at Lexington. That Hill spoke more or less truthfully added to Stephens's distress. Linton was probably right when he said that Aleck cared too much for what people were saying about him. It would probably have been better to emulate Toombs's fair example and snap his fingers in the face of critics. Toombs had met Hill during that same campaign. Hill was also boasting of what he had done to Toombs. Big Bob Toombs, however, could laugh and shrug those great shoulders of his. That was not Little Aleck's way. He always had to do something about every disparaging comment that came to him.

Then the last straw—Hill was reported as having said that Stephens had "betrayed the Whig Party and acted worse toward it than Judas Iscariot." Judas was a traitor to a man who had loved and befriended him. Hill's accusation was more than Stephens could bear. A traitor! He had spent his whole life trying to be true to his convictions and loyal to his friends.

From Crawfordville Stephens wrote to Hill. He demanded to know whether or not the information he had received was correct. Hill replied unsatisfactorily, failing to deny the Judas Iscariot comparison. Stephens asked for a more definite statement. He found the answer particularly offensive. Then by Thomas W. Thomas, Stephens sent a challenge to Hill. Thomas forwarded Hill's refusal to Stephens, who was then in Washington.

The little man was baffled and chagrined. Would it ap-

pear to his world that Hill was patronizing him because of his frailness? He had always wanted in some way, other than through the exercise of his intellect, to assert his manhood. In the encounter with Cone he had possibly shown that he was not a coward; he had not been a match, however, for his assailant. Herschel Johnson had refused to accept his challenge. Now another refusal. The words of Hill's letter rang in his mind with taunting insistence: "It might be some satisfaction to you to shoot at me, though I should entertain no great fear of being hit." (Again disparagement of the manhood he longed to see recognized!) "I might possibly kill you, and though you may not consider your life valuable, to take it would be a great annoyance to me afterward." (Patronizing, insulting phrases, yet cleverly worded. What were the people of Georgia saying and thinking? Were they applauding the author of that letter?) "This determination is but strengthened when the contrary course involves the violation of conscience and the hazard of my family, as against a man who has neither conscience nor family."

Insults of the sort Stephens could not endure in silence. "I have prepared and sent to the *Constitutionalist* a short card which seems to me proper," he wrote to Thomas. "You were perfectly right about the pistols. I should not have hesitated to fight with any weapon I could have used. I meant only to exclude the right of choosing any kind of weapon, such as broadswords, rifles, etc. . . . I only intended to put you on guard on that point as it might not have occurred to you that a rifle was too heavy for me." (Always the necessity to think of his physical disabilities—never the chance to meet a man on a man's own terms! It was galling enough without the added insult of the refusal to be met at all. There was no intellectual achievement that could compensate a man for a body that was too weak for the struggle.)

Stephens wanted to be assured that his constituents were not wholly against him. "Write me fully," he implored Thomas, "what you think of the course I have taken. I did not want to be coarser in my language than the necessity required. Was I enough so or not? Was I too short or not?"

As the weeks passed there was no lessening of his uneasiness. Because he was in Washington where he could not easily explain himself to the people who were probably misunderstanding the circumstances surrounding his quarrel with Hill, he was all the more anxious that Thomas set him right before Georgians. "I have done just what I conceived to be my duty to myself," he wrote piously two weeks later. "No man of recognized position shall insult me with impunity unless he shirks responsibility. . . . A man who might call me a damn liar and then take to his heels might escape punishment from me, for I could not catch him. But the damn lie from such a craven would not greatly excite my ire. And that is the present situation of Mr. Hill. . . . It is true that I can not horsewhip him even if I could catch him, which I would be justified in doing. . . . That some may presume upon my inability to use the cudgel or the horsewhip I have no doubt. . . . But if I had the strength of Samson, I should have done just what I have done, and no more."

To himself he was building up a defense against his weakness. It was comforting to believe that Hill had run like a craven. It was consoling to think that had he been a man strong enough to apply the whip—something that in his secret soul he had always longed to do—in the circumstances he could have done nothing more than send the challenge that had been refused. It was good to know that his card in the *Constitutionalist* had been read throughout the state. Perhaps his language had been rather reckless. Still, what else could he call Hill but a "lying gasconader,"

"an impudent braggart and a despicable poltroon besides," who had set up "wantonly to asperse private character and to malign individual reputation?"

Hill's reply went even further in the art of invective. "The truth is," he said, "Mr. Stephens has discovered that I have found him out, and if you want a man to hate you, let him be aware that you are honest, and that you know he is mean. . . . He is a monomaniac on the subject of falsehoods."

The amusement of Stephens's friends was suddenly reassuring. Hill, they said, had gone too far beyond the limits of verisimilitude. Georgia knew that her Little Aleck, contentious though he was, anxious though he might be for vindication even in the smallest matters, was neither mean nor a monomaniac on the subject of falsehoods. The time had come, they argued, to let the matter rest. Later he could deal with Hill, for the Know-Nothings were grooming him for the next gubernatorial campaign. Now the Democrats must find a man who could defeat him at the polls.

Though Stephens, "toting his own skillet," had been victorious over the Know-Nothings, the result of the campaign had not made him happy, for Linton, who also had been running for Congress in another district, had been defeated by a narrow margin. Aleck had been almost wholly sincere when he wrote to Linton during the campaign, "You embody all that is really dear to me in life. In you and about you are centered all my hopes and aspirations of an earthly nature, and whatever affects your welfare and happiness touches me more sensibly, if possible, than anything that affects my own. . . . If you are elected, I shall be content, whatever my fate."

Alexander Stephens had been returned to Congress, however, and Linton Stephens had been defeated. Yet despite the personal troubles and disappointments, he must be about

the business the people had entrusted to him. Certainly grave matters were before the nation.

During the summer Stephens had scored a legal triumph that afforded him no small amount of gratification. The Supreme Court of Georgia reversed the decision in a case that Stephens had lost before a lower court. A man by the name of Reese had been killed in a brothel by one Keener. The church people, rising in righteous wrath, had been in favor of hanging Keener—not so much because he had committed a murder as because he had been caught in a house of ill-fame. Therefore a fair trial had been almost impossible in the face of the public opinion that surrounded the accused man. The prosecution produced witnesses to show that Reese was a mild-mannered man. Stephens's case turned on one point: the deceased's character in the particular place where the killing occurred. The argument of the lawyer for the defense was sustained by the Supreme Court. A man might be mild under certain conditions and violent under others; therefore general reputation was not important. The court's decision that a man might possess a "character for railway cars and a character for the brothel, a character for the church and one for the street, a character when drunk and a character when sober" established a doctrine which has subsequently been recognized as law in Georgia. Alexander Stephens knew that to him was due credit for its recognition. Altogether, he had had a hard year but not an unprofitable one.

CHAPTER XIII

THE STORM GATHERS

ALEXANDER STEPHENS had at last become a Democrat, for the situation in Kansas had brought about a sectional alignment that he could not evade. Though it was difficult to get the facts concerning "Bleeding Kansas," his loyalty to the South led him to espouse the cause of the pro-slavery Missourians, who, since the establishment of the popular sovereignty principle, had been crossing into the neighboring territory for the purpose of swinging Kansas into the ranks of the slaveholding states. He had no sympathy with the Emigrant Aid Society, composed as it was of New England abolitionists who were paying the transportation of anti-slavery settlers to add to the number of Free-Soilers. Yet he knew that the state of affairs was ominous of disaster. After all, Abraham Lincoln had been right when he told Douglas that the squatter-rule doctrine would bring the Missourians and the Yankees into collision. To Lincoln's belief that the first drop of blood shed would be the death knell of the Union, Stephens was inclined to subscribe. Yet, as invented propaganda, he discounted many of the stories that concerned the "Kansas War."

With the majority of the Democrats he believed the constitutional convention, that had met at Topeka on October 23, 1855, and had framed a constitution prohibiting slavery, to have been illegally influenced by the Emigrant Aid Society. When the bill for the admission of Kansas under the Topeka constitution came before the House, he spoke in opposition, scouting the stories of the uprisings in Kansas. The Topeka constitution, he said, had been framed not by

bona fide voters but by men with guns in their hands. Again he defended slavery. "He that is born in thy house," he quoted from Genesis, "and he that is bought with thy money must be circumcised." Accordingly, it could not be denied that Abraham was a slaveholder and a dealer in slaves. Did not the Old Testament command that the slaves of the Israelites "should be of the heathen that are round about" and that "over your own brethren ye shall not rule with rigor"? "Our Southern system is in strict conformity with this injunction. Men of our own blood and our own race, wherever born and from whatever clime they come, are free and equal. We have no estates or classes among white men. . . . Our slaves are taken from the heathen tribes—the barbarians of Africa. In our households they are brought within the pale of the covenant, under Christian teaching and influence. . . . Nor does the negro feel any sense of degradation in his condition. He occupies the same grade or rank in society that he does in the scale of being; it is his natural place; and all things fit when nature's great law of order is conformed to."

By slow degrees Alexander Stephens had reasoned himself into complete advocacy of slavery. He had even blinded himself to the evils that the institution had wrought in the South. In declaring that there was no caste system among the people of the white race, he had overlooked the effect of the slaveholding aristocracy upon the masses of poor tenant farmers, who could own no slaves and who were thrown into a lower stratum of society from which the institution prevented their escape. In the late 'fifties, however, men were reasoning little; they were swept on the tide of emotionalism that rose higher and higher as the national crisis became more acute.

It was a motley Congress that convened in December, 1855, which even the *Congressional Globe* despaired of classifying into parties. Two months were consumed in the

election of a speaker, with Banks, Fuller and Richardson running close. During the wrangling Stephens lost his last vestige of faith in congressmen. "If men were reliable creatures," he wrote Linton, "I should say Banks can never be elected, but my experience has taught me that very little confidence is to be placed on what they say or what they do."

Yet on February second the plurality rule was set aside and Banks with a majority of two votes was declared speaker. The election was a victory for the Republicans, though Democrats were still the majority party. The weeks passed with no cessation of the wranglings. Kansas—poor "Bleeding Kansas"—caused all the trouble. In the Senate contention reached its climax when Charles Sumner, of Massachusetts, delivered his philippic, which he called *The Crime against Kansas*. Two days later Preston Brooks, of South Carolina, beat the Senator from Massachusetts insensible. Robert Toombs, also outraged by Sumner's attack upon the South, had stood by without interfering. There was a consequent increase of excitement in Congress and throughout the country, which precluded all chance of settling the Kansas question.

In the meantime a presidential election was imminent. Inevitably Kansas would be the principal issue before the people. The Democrats met in Cincinnati on June second and nominated James Buchanan, chiefly because the electoral votes of his state of Pennsylvania were needed. The Republicans nominated John C. Frémont, of California. In their platform they claimed that it was "both the right and the duty of Congress to prohibit in the territories those twin relics of barbarism—polygamy and slavery." The American Party—or Know-Nothings—nominated Fillmore.

On August 21, 1856, while the national campaign was under way, Congress was called in extraordinary session. The Proviso, aimed at the prohibition of slavery from the territories, was revived. The day after the convening of

Congress Alexander Stephens wrote to his brother, "We have just taken a final vote on the motion to lay on the table a motion to reconsider the vote of the House by which they had declared their adherence to the proviso scheme. . . . One vote against us. This is the end of the bill. Seven more Southern men absent than Northern. On several votes we lost two or three Southern men who were too drunk to be brought in." The next day, however, he wrote again: "We may reconsider our vote whereby we agreed to adhere to the proviso. And if so, we may get out of the woods. But I am enraged at the last vote. Rust of Arkansas was out—lost his vote. It seems impossible to keep Southern representatives in their seats. About one-tenth of them need a master. If all our men had been here, we would have beaten the enemy by a clear majority of three."

Though he had become a member of the Democratic Party, Stephens was not in sympathy with the methods of his colleagues. Drinking out of working hours was a man's own affair. Representatives, however, were paid to look after their people's interests. Day after day as he sat through the tedious roll-calls and voted again and again on questions that could have been settled finally if members had remained in their seats, as he helped to round up the missing Democrats and saw them tottering in at late hours, his indignation increased. What was the use, after all, of continuing the fight when so little real patriotism and loyalty existed? Yet, homesick as he was for the peace of Crawfordville, believing at times that there could never be a satisfactory settlement of the difficulties, Alexander Stephens fought doggedly in behalf of convictions, around which he had thrown up entrenchments that could not be taken.

The eyes of the country were turned away from Congress toward the presidential election of the fall. In the South there was hope that a Democratic victory might bring

some kind of solution. "The election of Frémont would be the end of the union and ought to be," Toombs was saying. "The object of Frémont's friends is the conquest of the South. I am content that they should own us when they conquer us but not before." Stephens, however, did not admit that any situation could make dissolution a necessity. He was hoping that Buchanan would be elected but making no predictions and no threats. Nor did the Democratic victory of the fall bring to him any real assurance that troublous times were at an end.

He saw at once that the Dred Scott decision, rendered March 6, 1857, and declaring that negroes "were not intended to be included under the word 'citizen' in the constitution and therefore can claim none of the rights and privileges which that instrument provides for and secures to the citizens of the United States" and further declaring the Missouri Compromise unconstitutional, was fraught with dangerous possibilities. The hysteria in the North had reached a peak that would cause the people not only to disregard Supreme Court decisions but to find a way to defy them openly.

During the winter and spring there had been no abatement of the furor in Kansas. The arrival of the new Governor the latter part of May did not bring about peace. Pessimism in the South had taken a violent form. Leaders in Georgia, though gratified that Buchanan had been elected, expressed in daily conversation the conviction shared by other southerners that the time had passed for compromises. The South must be assured that her rights and her peculiar institution were safeguarded. Alexander Stephens, very low in his mind, was saying little.

In Georgia the political situation was crucial. The American Party had placed Benjamin H. Hill in the field as its candidate for governor. Stephens felt that no disaster could be greater than Hill's election. Yet the man had

gained in popularity. He was powerful on the stump. His personality was pleasing. In Stephens's thinking there was always present the undercurrent of hatred he felt for the young man who had shown no reverence for his political elders, who could call him and Toombs names that should never have come from the lips of youth. To make matters more serious, Toombs was out of the state. Some lands that he had purchased in Texas were reported to be occupied by squatters who challenged Toombs's ownership. Certainly Bob Toombs was not the man to sit calmly in a distant state and permit his property to go to others. He had traveled as rapidly as possible to Texas just at the time that he was most needed in Georgia. There was no way to communicate with him. Stephens was rather lonely and forlorn—a Castor unfortified by his Pollux. Yet Democrats must meet and name a candidate who could successfully oppose the formidable Hill. The man must be young. It was better that he should have no political past which Hill could use against him as he had used the careers of Toombs and Stephens. In times like these men had of necessity laid aside old party affiliations and reversed judgments to suit new conditions. Hill was a genius when it came to capitalizing the mistakes of the older leaders. Toombs and Stephens were not available for the gubernatorial race. Howell Cobb had accepted the secretaryship of the treasury under Buchanan. George M. Troup, now seventy-six years old, was living in wealthy retirement upon his plantation. Judge Berrien was dead. Ex-Governor George W. Crawford was refusing public honors. There was a young man, however, who had recently become prominent. Joe Brown was his name. He had sprung from plain people in South Carolina. Since his coming to Georgia, he had taken effective interest in politics, always evincing a genius either for choosing the winner or for helping his choice to become the winner. People had smiled when they heard a story

current in 1856. A neighbor had called on Brown's mother, wanting to know whom Joe was supporting for governor. "Joe's been a-thinkin' he'll take it himself this time," Mrs. Brown had replied ingenuously. Soon Democrats reached the conclusion that Joe's idea was not a bad one. They met in convention and nominated him to oppose the urbane and accomplished Hill. Toombs, having been on his ranch lands cut off from the world, arrived at a railroad station in Texas and asked for news from Georgia. "Joe Brown is the Democratic candidate for governor," some one told him. "Who in the devil is Joe Brown?" Toombs is reported to have replied.

Later he and Stephens confided to each other their fear that Brown would not be able to handle Hill in debate. They were mistaken, however. The newcomer was a match for his opponent. Brown was elected governor of the state to the utmost satisfaction of Alexander Stephens, who probably would have preferred Lucifer to Hill.

The young man who had decided to take the governorship himself was a headstrong fellow. It was soon perfectly clear that he intended to reform the social life at the executive mansion. At other inaugurations the guests who had gathered from the four corners of the state had been royally entertained. Every one had got gloriously drunk on the wines and liquors that were freely dispensed. Crockery had been broken; furniture had been demolished; and Georgians had enjoyed the occasions according to long established ante-bellum standards. But Joe decreed that there would be no bacchanalian feast at his inauguration. The country boy was against all that sort of thing. He argued, of course, that his Baptist-trained conscience guided him. It is more likely that his early life in the little town of Pickens, South Carolina, had not given him the social graces requisite for executive functions. At any rate, the state was rather annoyed. Who indeed was Joe Brown to be overturning

established custom and depriving his constituents of their fun? Nevertheless Joe piously went his way. His inauguration was exceedingly dull, and the tame receptions that took the place of the levees of other years were utterly impossible. But Brown knew what he was doing. There had been numerous revivals throughout Georgia, coming, of course, as a corollary of the sectional hysteria. The church people were growing in power. With these the Governor was making himself solid.

While the country and the state were torn by conflicts, the death of Linton's wife touched Alexander Stephens deeply. Linton's marriage had been altogether happy. Though the older brother was frequently lonely, in the second place to which he had been relegated, he had derived a deal of vicarious happiness from Linton's contentment. Emm had been a devoted wife. The three little girls were merry and well. The visits to Sparta had been the nearest approach to real home life that Alexander Stephens had ever experienced. Now Linton's grief was his own as the younger brother came to him for comfort or wrote long heartrending letters. "You, above anything else or anybody else, are the object of my solicitude, anxiety, and love," he wrote one evening in March, 1857, after Linton had returned home from a visit to Liberty Hall. "I feel for you in your grief. I mourn with you in your sorrow. I weep with you in your distress." Then followed suggestions for rehabilitation of a life that had temporarily lost all purpose and objective. Linton needed him now as the boy had needed him in the long-ago days. The two men in their loneliness were drawn closer together.

In Washington that winter Stephens took up the old national conflict where it had been left off. Kansas had applied for admission under another constitution. In a convention held in October and dominated by the pro-slavery element, the Lecompton Constitution had been

framed in opposition to the Topeka. It was presented to the people to be voted on with the slavery provision or without the slavery provision. There had been no chance to vote upon the constitution itself. The advocates of slavery had carried the election held on December twenty-first. Douglas, who had brought about the whole troublous situation by his popular sovereignty doctrine, was indignant because of the apparent injustice. Stephens, however, weary of the long struggle and desirous of seeing the question settled in a manner advantageous to the South, was in favor of admitting Kansas on the Lecompton Constitution. When the President discussed the matter with him early in February, he advised Buchanan to incorporate in his message recommendation that Kansas be admitted. He confided to Linton, however, that he thought it unfortunate in many respects that the interview had been sought. He expressed the opinion that Buchanan meant to do right but was worn down by office-seekers. Indeed he was feeble and wan and appeared to be in failing health. As usual, Stephens added a word in condemnation of the southern representatives who were neglecting the duties entrusted to them.

Two days after writing this gloomy letter, he witnessed a depressing episode in the House. Another hot-headed South Carolinian precipitated a fight. Grow, of Pennsylvania, was attacked by Keitt, of South Carolina. The next day Aleck wrote Linton that he was doubtful as to the outcome of the Kansas bill. "Last night we had a battle royal in the House. Thirty men at least were engaged in the fisticuff. Fortunately no weapons were used. No one was hurt or even scratched, I believe, but bad feeling was produced by it. . . . All things here are tending to bring my mind to the conclusion that the Union can not and will not last long."

Stephens was a member of the select committee of fifteen appointed to consider the President's message. It was he

who wrote the majority report averring that a large number of states would look upon the rejection of Kansas "with extreme sensitiveness, if not alarm." The report expressed the author's deepest convictions. Governor Brown had written him: "If Kansas is rejected I think self-respect will compel the Southern members of Congress, and especially the members from Georgia, to vacate their seats and return to their constituents to assist them in drawing around themselves new safeguards of their rights in the future. When the Union ceases to promote our equal rights, it ceases to have any charms for me." And again a few weeks later: "If Kansas is rejected by a direct vote I see no other course for Georgia to take but to stand by her rights, upon her platform, and act, or confess to the world that she has backed down from her solemn pledges."

Again the invalid's health was breaking under the strain. What was the use, he asked Linton, of sacrificing himself for a cause that was being lost by its friends? Again the southerners were not in their seats when important measures came to a vote. The Union he loved was about to go under despite all his efforts to save it. It was hard to be mixing daily with men who had no real patriotism. It seemed that he did nothing now but try to keep southerners sober and get them to attend Congress in condition to know what they were doing. The Kansas bill, which had passed the Senate, was defeated in the House on April first. All Fools' Day it was. Alexander Stephens told himself that he might have known something foolhardy would take place. Now that he was weary and sick, he had lapsed again into superstition. He reminded Linton that the night before his stepmother had died he had heard the screams of a strange bird, which Ben had said were signs of death. Again a sense of impending disaster was bearing down on him. When Toombs gave a dinner on May third with thirteen people seated at the table, he admitted to Linton that he

was inordinately uneasy. Early in June he found that he was seeing poorly. At last he purchased glasses. That evening when he poured out his soul to Linton, he was filled with sorrow. He was getting old. The struggle was almost at an end. Had it, after all, been worth the great effort it had cost?

When Buchanan broke with Douglas over Kansas and lent his influence to Lincoln who was then opposing Douglas in Illinois, Stephens was aghast. He, too, had differed with Douglas, but even large differences could be forgotten now. He admonished the President but always to no avail. Toward the close of the year he had a long conference with Buchanan and sought to bring about a reconciliation between him and Douglas. "I suppose he thinks I am against him," he wrote Linton, "because I am not against Douglas's reelection to the Senate."

Then it was that he sent Linton a letter which the brother immediately destroyed because of some morbid secret it disclosed.

"You may be right in supposing," Linton replied, "that you have succeeded in keeping to yourself the secret of a misery that has preyed upon you, and yet preys upon you. The fact has long been known to me. The cause you have never communicated to me, but I do not doubt that I know it. I may be wholly mistaken; and I have never asked you a question about it to settle any doubt that I might have, for several reasons. I look upon it as a key to your character. If I am right, I comprehend your character and feelings better than you think; if I am wrong, I don't understand you at all. In my judgment it is the foundation of your highest virtues, and the source of your greatest faults. If I know you, one of your leading virtues is a resolute, determined, almost dogged kindness and devotion of service to mankind, who have, in your judgment, no claim on your affection, and whom your impulses lead you to despise. This is a great battle that often rages, the conflict between your resolution to be kind and your impulse to be almost revengeful.

The habitual triumph of the principle over the feeling is all the more bright from the fierceness of the conflict. I think I not only partly know 'what's done' but also 'what's resisted.' One of your greatest faults, which has been more and more corrected from year to year, and which therefore must be known to you, is the residuum of what's not resisted—an imperiousness which loves to show the herd how much they are your inferiors in certain points. . . . I think you are under a mistaken and unhappy philosophy; or perhaps it is more accurate to say that your philosophy has failed to cure the unhappiness of your constitution. . . . The opinions of people have too much power to affect your happiness. It is so. Besides, you impute to them sometimes opinions that they do not have. I would not obtrude an unwelcome word on you; and I hope that I have not done so."

Though the letter provided food for serious thought, Aleck did not misunderstand the spirit in which it was written. Perhaps Linton was entirely right. As he looked back over the hard years of his youth, over the struggles that had brought his first successes at the law, over those early political campaigns when the man who looked like a boy had striven for recognition, he knew that he had been sustained by a realization that within that massive head of his was a brain with power to lift him above the herd whose mental processes he scorned. In his letters to Linton he had expressed himself sincerely. Of course, the superiority he felt to his associates crept into the words and between the lines. Yet had he always fought against revengeful tendencies in his nature? Perhaps. His kindness to tramps, his financial assistance to many boys who wanted an education, the help he was giving a girl, deformed in body but strong in mind, might be merely unconscious efforts to overcome the vengeancefulness that Linton had detected. He thought, moreover, that Linton's discovery had not been made by others. Members of his immediate family believed in him implicitly. His brother, John L. Stephens, who had died in 1856, had practically willed his family to Aleck. All

his estate he had left to Alexander H. Stephens "to be managed, controlled, and disposed of by him and at his discretion for the payment of my debt and for the use of my beloved wife and children" because of his "unbounded confidence" in him and reliance upon "that fraternal kindness which had heretofore been unfailing." Since the estate had amounted to little after the payment of the debts, that will had meant that Alexander Stephens must support his brother's family. He had done so joyfully. Could it be that his efforts to overcome the great fault that Linton had described were responsible for all his good deeds?

Just what was the "morbid secret" that Alexander Stephens confided to Linton? Johnston and Browne, who published their biography five years before Stephens's death, hazarded a guess. It had to do, they said, with Mr. Stephens's celibacy. Twice the little invalid had been in love—with the little girl in Madison, Georgia, and later with a mature woman who he had reason to believe would have been willing to marry him. He was too proud, thought the contemporary biographers, to impose his invalidism upon a wife. So they conjectured that the secret he confided to Linton had to do with unconsummated love. Others who knew Mr. Stephens, however, are prone to discount Johnston's and Browne's romantic explanation. Alexander Stephens, all brain and little body, was not the victim of the inexorable call that comes to other men. The emotion which he interpreted as love was wholly a mental experience. Many years later he confided to his secretary, John M. Graham, that he believed there was in his nature more of the woman than existed in any other man he recalled unless it was "Dick" Clark, referring to Judge Richard H. Clark of the Supreme Court. His attachment to Linton savored strongly of the maternal. There was a romantic element in his friendship with Toombs. Strong men attracted him. He needed frequently to be comforted and sus-

tained by them, far more than he needed the love of woman. That he was set apart from other men, though the differences were attributable to frailness and not to abnormality, doubtless preyed on his mind. Just as he longed to be able to put up a good fight, so doubtless he desired the sense of completed manhood which sex experiences seem to have power to bring. Something of this may have been the secret he confided to Linton.

The self-analysis to which he subjected himself after the receipt of Linton's letter may have gone a long way toward curing the fits of despondency that he had not been able to resist. Self-knowledge, he had said when speaking to college boys some years before, was a requisite of success. He would seek to know himself better. Later he wrote that he was overcoming the melancholy that had been his curse. Perhaps Linton's letter helped him to find a way to silence the dominant minor chord in his thinking. He must see himself in relation, not only to his own unhappiness, but to the history he was helping to make. He was living in an age great in achievement and pregnant with future possibilities. That year the submarine cable had been laid. The salutations between Queen Victoria and James Buchanan marked the dawning of a new era when the peoples of all the world would be in daily communication with one another. From the perspective afforded by the ages, the difficulties that now loomed large would seem of petty consequence.

One last appeal Stephens made to Buchanan. Again he urged cessation of the war against Douglas. He warned the President that if the rift between the two men were not closed, there would be a "burst-up" at the Democratic Convention in Charleston. When Buchanan continued obdurate, Stephens reached the decision with which he had been toying: he would not return to Congress. There was work for him to do in Georgia. If the Union were to be preserved, men would be needed to carry the fight to the states. At any

rate, he was sure that he could be of no further service in Washington.

Stephens made his last speech in Congress on February 12, 1859, when he argued for the admission of Oregon. There were southerners who opposed allowing another free state to enter the Union because of the advantage that the North would derive from an increased number of senators and representatives in Congress. The admission of Oregon as a free state was logical, however. Slavery was not wanted or needed in the North. To Stephens the opposition seemed unjust and unwise. Oregon should be admitted. Again the man who was capable of placing right above expediency was speaking.

When news of his retirement spread among his friends, the House and the Senate expressed a desire to give a banquet in his honor. On account of other engagements, however, he was forced to decline. On that chilly March afternoon in 1859 when the steamer was carrying him toward Georgia, Alexander Stephens, wrapped in his greatcoat and shawl, stood looking back toward the city that he was leaving. A friend touched him on the shoulder.

"Perhaps you are thinking," he said, "of the time when you will be returning to Washington."

"No," Alexander Stephens replied with uncanny prescience, "I never expect to see Washington again, unless I am brought here as a prisoner of war."

He was retiring to private life, he told those who inquired concerning his plans. Yet he must have known that in the years that were to follow there could be no private life for a man who had become enmeshed in the affairs that were tearing a nation asunder. He was merely going back to try to save the state and the people he loved.

CHAPTER XIV

LIGHTNING STRIKES

AS ALEXANDER STEPHENS might have foreseen, Georgians had no intention of letting him rest. There was chance for only a few games of whist with the guests who flocked to see him at Liberty Hall before the insistence that he make known in a public address his reasons for retirement from Congress caused him to accede to the general demand. He was glad to review before his constituents the part he had played in national affairs. There were points that he wanted to drive home. There were stands of his that perhaps needed vindication. There were warnings that needed to be given.

So on the second of July, 1859, he spoke at City Hall Park in Augusta. His record was inextricably tangled with the progress of Georgia since 1836. He had sponsored the first woman's college in the South; he had stood for supporting the University at Athens; the annexation of Texas had been immediately beneficial to the interests of Georgia. He retold the story of his opposition to the Mexican War. In rapid and able summary he sketched the other large questions he had helped to solve. In his advocacy of slavery he went the whole way. The institution, he said, rested upon principles that could not be assailed by law, and its entrenchments of late had been substantially strengthened. Thirty years before, Virginia had been on the verge of abolition. Then, abolition sentiment had been growing throughout the entire South. Now, thinking southerners were realizing, he declared, that "subordination was the normal condition of the negro." The change had been due to the ac-

tivities of the northern agitators following the Compromises of 1850. "Questions that were doubtful and mooted before these agitations have since been settled, settled by all the departments of the government, the legislative, the executive, and the judiciary."

Then Stephens leaped to the ultimate conclusion predicated by his premises and advocated the reopening of the slave traffic and an increase of negroes from abroad. "It takes people to make states, and it requires people of the African race to make slave states. You may not expect to see many of the territories come into the Union as slave states unless we have an increase of African stock."

Step by step Stephens had convinced himself that slavery was humane and right, that the negro from the jungles was better off about southern homes than he could ever be in his native land, and that slavery was conducive to progress in the South. From mild advocacy he had evolved into vehemence. Yet through it all he remained the kindest and most humane of men. The negroes about the village loved him. When one was asked to describe Mr. Stephens, he said, "Marse Aleck's kinder to dawgs dan mos' men is to folks." The speech in Augusta must be viewed in its relation to the abnormal times that immediately preceded the terrible 'sixties.

The temper of the Augusta speech was calm. Stephens was trying to assure an excited people that all would be well. Nothing could be gained, he thought, by transferring to them the discouragement that caused his retirement from Congress. If peace were to be achieved, the minds of men must be turned from all thoughts of war. The South must be made to feel that the Compromises of 1850 were fair and that there was a possibility that they would provide a permanent basis for future adjustments of sectional difficulties. The leaders who were inciting the people to wrath were guilty, he thought, of the greatest crime that had ever been

committed against the country. When he besought his audience "to stand by the constitution in any and every event," the people rose to their feet, cheering wildly. Perhaps there was yet a chance to reestablish the principles set down in 1787.

"I must now take my farewell leave," Stephens concluded. "My race has been run—my career is ended; whether it has been for good or for evil, the record is made up. . . . There is no office under heaven that I desire or wish ever to hold."

When leading Georgians gave him a farewell dinner, he reiterated his desire to spend the rest of his days practising law in Crawfordville. Weary of the long struggle, he was sincerely desiring rest.

Yet how could there be rest in days so pregnant with disaster? Less than two weeks later Iverson, of the Georgia senate, spoke in opposition to all that Stephens had said. He denounced the compromises, the Kansas bill, Douglas's doctrine of popular sovereignty, and declared that Congress should protect slavery in all the territories. Georgia was divided between the conservative and the radical camps. Early in June Governor Brown had written Stephens that, according to rumors that had reached him, efforts were being made to organize a new party in Georgia. "The indications," he had said, "seem to be that we shall have two delegations at Charleston." In that event, he added, the position of the state would be considerably weakened. Brown wanted advice from Stephens, who was himself too perplexed by the recent developments in Georgia to know just what course would be most effective.

In the meantime many men were requesting Stephens to allow his name to be presented as Democratic candidate for the presidency. He occupied a middle ground, they argued, between the Douglas and the Buchanan factions. Brown was insistent in urging him not to say that he would

refuse the nomination if it were tendered him at Charleston. Stephens, however, did not want the honor. "I had as lief be put on a list of horse thieves as in the number of those aspiring to the presidency," he said. And again: "Perhaps Old Buck thinks I am an insidious rival. If so, alas, poor old fellow! How his views would change if he could know how I pity him!" "What amazes me in Douglas," he is reported to have said later, "is his desire to be president. I have sometimes asked him what he desired the office for. It has never added to the reputation of a single man." Though Alexander Stephens could never keep out of public affairs, he did not want to be placed in positions of the greatest responsibility. Indeed, the year before he had been adamant in his refusal to run for the speakership of the House.

Through the summer the rift in the Democratic Party of Georgia widened. What with the law practise that now came to him, with the guests who flocked to Liberty Hall to discuss the many ramifications of the situation, and with the heat, Stephens was exhausted by the first of September. Nevertheless, he spoke again in Augusta. The people wanted to hear him; and there were things that he should say to them. He made another plea in behalf of the Union. His voice faltered, however, and his knees gave way beneath him. Finally it was necessary for him to finish his address from a seat on the platform. The audience was attentive. The people could not doubt the sincerity of the earnest, intense little man who pleaded with them.

Between Toombs and Stephens difference of opinion had arisen. On September eighth Toombs spoke in favor of Buchanan's policy of slavery protection in the territories and against "squatter sovereignty." Georgia was puzzled. It was the first time that their Castor and Pollux had not stood together on an important issue.

Stephens had not lost his power over the audiences of Georgia, however. Ill though he was, he accepted other in-

vitations to exhort the people to patience and amity. Yet there were forces at work to break the spell he was able to cast from the platform. After John Brown's raid of October seventeenth, all reason seemed to have been destroyed.

When Congress reassembled in December, Robert Toombs returned to his seat in the Senate. Immediately he wrote Stephens that everybody in Washington was at sea. "The old fogies are all candidates for the presidency," he said, "from the highest to the lowest, and are as silent and sanctimonious as a whore at a christening." He reiterated his oft-expressed regret that Stephens had refused to allow his name to be presented at the Charleston convention. "I think it is very unwise in you and hurtful to the country. I think you could be nominated, especially after they are done fighting their battle of weakness."

Stephens was too sick, however, and too discouraged to yield even to Bob Toombs's persuasion. On January fifth he wrote gloomily to his friend, J. Henly Smith, a newspaper correspondent in Washington, that he was out of sorts in health, a condition that might be attributed to bad weather. Times were hard, he said. Provisions were high, and property was higher than he had ever known it to be. What distressed him most, moreover, was the apathy of the people. The President's message had been published more than a week. Yet no one in the village had read it—not even the two lawyers. "How the honor of being a member of Congress," he wailed, "and working and worrying oneself half to death for the good of the people at home vanishes into thin air and becomes perfectly nothing in the estimation of one mingling with the people and seeing how little they care for such things! I had no idea that what was going on at the seat of government produced so little effect upon the public mind as it does. If I had known the fact, I think I should have quit long ago."

It was rumors, he decided, and the propaganda of the fire-

eaters that incited the people. No one seemed to be studying public questions and reaching sane conclusions.

Toombs wrote on January 11, 1860, that he had no prophecy to make concerning the outcome of the nomination tangle. He thought, however that Buchanan would like to prevent the nomination of another in order to make himself necessary. "This is impossible. He weakens with the party every day."

Stephens could no longer blind himself to the inevitability of disunion. He would not fear it so much, he confided in a letter to Toombs, if he could trust the stability of the leaders. Yet he knew the South would be no better off in a new republic than it was now. There would be the same wrangling, he prophesied. The troubles, he insisted, grew out of the characters of the public men in both North and South. Disunion would lead only to further confusion unless men could agree upon some line of policy; and, if they could, disunion would be unnecessary. "Republics," he said, "can be sustained only by virtue, intelligence, and patriotism." Little of these qualities he had discovered among congressmen, who seemed to be concerned only with votes and personal aggrandizement.

Stephens thought it passing strange that his friends, to whom he had expressed himself emphatically, continued to urge that he reconsider and allow his name to be presented at Charleston. It was annoying that Georgians were seriously contemplating placing him in the running when the state convention met at Milledgeville. He wrote asking J. Henly Smith to do all in his power to silence the newspapers. He begged Dr. Henry R. Casey, who had been elected delegate to the convention, to use his influence against the movement. This was no time, he insisted, for states to be putting forward their favorites.

He was not surprised when events took their disastrous course at Charleston. Had he not prophesied it all to Bu-

chanan, again and again to Robert Toombs, and to others who visited Liberty Hall? "This may be the beginning of the end," he wrote to his friend Richard Johnston on May sixth. "I am sorry things are as they are, sorry as I should be to see some dear friend in a fit of delirium tremens."

Stephens had known that Douglas's opponents would introduce a plank declaring for protection of slavery in the territories. That their resolution would be rejected, he had also had no doubt. He had even believed that the faction opposed to Douglas would withdraw from the convention and nominate a candidate of their own. The adjournment to Richmond and thence to Baltimore was in accord with his somber predictions. Certain that there would be two sets of candidates to oppose the Republican nominees, he was not surprised when a third appeared in the field. Though he had no hope that Lincoln could be defeated, he declared himself for Stephen A. Douglas and Herschel V. Johnson, whom the regular wing of the party had nominated. His old animosity for the man who had refused to meet him in a duel was drowned in the larger issues. Douglas and Johnson stood for the preservation of the Union, he thought; therefore, Alexander Stephens would support them to the utmost of his ability, though he knew that both Bell and Breckinridge would receive larger votes in Georgia.

"You will see from my speeches," Toombs had written before the convention, "fully where we differ, though I am perfectly prepared to accommodate the party differences when you think proper." Agreement, however, had proved impossible. He and Toombs knew now that the condition of the party precluded all hope of victory. As Stephens had expected, the Georgia Democrats met and endorsed Breckinridge and Lane. With Toombs as presiding officer and genius of the body, nothing else could have happened. The next week the Douglas wing convened and appointed Alexander H. Stephens and A. R. Wright their electors. There

was a third convention also, composed of the followers of Bell.

Hopelessly but doggedly Stephens canvassed the state from seashore to mountains, from the Savannah River to the boundary of Alabama, preaching his doctrine of peace and adherence to constitutional liberty. In Dalton, when his strength completely failed, Linton took his place. At last Aleck rose and stumbled toward the speaker's table. " 'Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem,' cried the thin shrill voice, 'thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered my children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not! ' " The words produced a profound effect. Yet as Linton continued his address there were frequent interruptions that touched upon Douglas's doctrines. Again Alexander Stephens rose. With his thin right hand lifted above his head, he said in a voice that suddenly gathered volume, "Rather than that this hand should put a vote in the ballot box in condemnation of Stephen A. Douglas, I would prefer letting it go down to posterity covered with the infamy of having poured the hemlock into the cup of Socrates."

On Saturday evening, September 1, 1860, he told a vast audience that had again assembled to hear him at the City Hall Park in Augusta that when he had last appeared to speak in their city he had honestly expected to retire from public life. Yet the exigencies of the situation had caused him to come again before the people of Georgia. He still believed, he said, that it was possible to check the disruption that seemed imminent. The government as it was, he thought worth preserving. The question before the people of Georgia now was which candidate to support in the fall election. His answer was unequivocally the national Democratic ticket headed by Douglas and Johnson, which was based upon congressional non-interference with slavery in

the states and in the territories. His defense of Douglas was powerful. "There is much more I wish to say," he concluded, "but my strength has failed—I am completely exhausted. I can only add: Look at the questions in all their bearings—and as patriots do your duty, trust the rest to God."

As he sat down, there were calls for other speakers who did not respond. George W. Lamar then announced that Mr. Stephens would be able to continue in a few moments. The audience waited patiently. When Stephens rose again, his voice was trembling. Yet, because of its penetrating quality it reached the furthest hearer. "I do not feel, fellow citizens," he said, "as if, in justice to myself, I ought to attempt to say more to-night; but there is no cause in which I would more willingly die than in the cause of my country; and I would just as soon fall here, at this time, in the advocacy of those principles upon which its past glory has been achieved, its present prosperity and its future hopes depend, as anywhere else, or on any other occasion."

The audience was with the speaker. When Stephens declared that the movement at Charleston which Breckinridge and Lane had countenanced would certainly lead to disunion, the applause was deafening. Whatever might be the outcome of the election, it was clear that Little Aleck was enshrined in the hearts of his neighbors.

The desperately serious campaign was not without its amusing aspects. A. R. Wright and Alexander Stephens were working for the same candidate. Georgians had not forgotten the time that the two men had opposed each other. They liked to recall one debate that had proved interesting. Colonel Wright had quoted his opponent as having remarked that he could eat Ben Hill for breakfast, Ranse Wright for dinner, and Bob Trippe for supper. When Stephens rose to reply, he denied having said anything of the sort. "If I had contemplated a feast of these characters," he piped, "I should have reversed the order. I should prefer

Ben Hill for breakfast and Bob Trippe for dinner, and, remembering my mother's advice always to eat light suppers, I should tip off with my friend, Colonel Wright."

Early in the summer Stephens had prepared the way for the stand he would make after the inevitable election of Abraham Lincoln: he had written then to J. Henly Smith that he would not be in favor of disunion in any event. Indeed, he considered Lincoln as good a man as Buchanan and quite as safe. "I know the man well. He is not a bad man. He will make as good a president as Fillmore—better, too, in my opinion. He has a great deal more practical common sense. Still his party may do mischief." Yet he saw no reason to hope for greater security out of the Union. "We have nothing to fear from anything so much as unnecessary changes in government."

The summer was hot and dry. The people were uneasy and distressed in mind. Stephens's health was at its worst. He missed the long political talks with Toombs and the intimacy that had always sustained his trying seasons. Now when he saw his old friend, he refrained from talking politics. Consequently, the relationship was strained and unnatural. It is not surprising that in his frame of mind he should have quarreled with Thomas W. Thomas, to whom he had been devoted for years. In the hottest of dog-days Stephens lost a case in Judge Thomas's court. After making an appeal, he said in bad temper that Thomas was a tyrant. The Judge was deeply hurt. Because he knew his friend, however, he made allowances which later restored the former cordial relation. A fall which Stephens sustained early in August added to his general discomfort. He tripped and stumbled down eight flights of steps to the pavement below. Frail as he was, he began to feel that he was destined to nothing but suffering.

He was in better health, however, when news came of Lincoln's election. "It does not surprise me in the least," he wrote to Smith. "I have been expecting it ever since the

burst-up in Baltimore, as you know very well. What is to be the result I can not tell. We shall, I apprehend, have trouble."

When the state legislature invited him to address the body upon the situation, he accepted willingly. Robert Toombs had spoken on the evening of November thirteenth. Stephens replied on the fourteenth. "Will you submit to abolition rule or will you resist?" Toombs had thundered. "I ask you to give me the sword, for if you do not give it to me, as God lives, I will take it myself." It was not an easy task to answer the forensic and impassioned oratory of his dearest friend.

Stephens was in no happy frame of mind as he entered the legislative hall, though he was greeted by prolonged applause. He began in cool dispassionate logic, however, warming slowly as his argument advanced. "Don't give up the ship. Don't abandon her yet," he pleaded.

"The ship has leaks in her," some one called.

"Let us stop them if we can," Stephens rejoined. "Many a stout old ship has been saved with the richest cargo after many leaks—and it may be so now."

When the cheering ceased, Stephens argued that the election of no man as president of the United States was sufficient cause for disunion. "If all our hopes are to be blasted, if the republic is to go down, let us be found to the last moment standing on the deck with the Constitution of the United States waving over our heads." The applause served as a stimulant. To the contention that Lincoln's principles were against the Constitution, he answered, "If he violates the Constitution, then will be our time to act. Do not let us break it because, forsooth, he may. If he does, that is the time for us to strike." Since Lincoln was to be no king, he could not jeopardize the safety of the South. Though the Republicans had elected him president, Congress was still preponderantly Democratic. He could not

even appoint his Cabinet without the consent of a Democratic Senate.

"If the Senate is Democratic, it is for Breckinridge," cried Bob Toombs.

"Well, then, I apprehend that no man could be justly untrue to the interests of Georgia—to hold an office which a Breckinridge Senate had given him even though Lincoln should be president."

The applause was prolonged.

Stephens went on to declare that he wanted equality for Georgia, and that he believed equality was possible within the Union. As he continued, the interruptions from Toombs were more and more frequent. Stephens, however, remained calm, always addressing Toombs as "my friend." He did not deny that there were defects in the country. Yet under its government Georgia had prospered. Now before seceding Georgia should wait for an act of aggression. The legislature, moreover, was without power to commit the state to any policy. On the question the whole people must be heard. Therefore, he urged that a convention be called. Then, if Georgia should secede, Alexander Stephens would bow to the will of the people.

The mighty voice of Robert Toombs rose above the applause and cheers that followed Stephens's address. "Fellow citizens," he was saying to men who were accustomed to give heed to his words, "we have just listened to a speech from one of the brightest intellects and purest patriots that now live. I move that this meeting now adjourn with three cheers for Alexander H. Stephens of Georgia."

When some one later complimented Toombs upon the magnanimity of his proposal, "I was always taught to behave well at a funeral," he replied with a smile that was not in the least merry.

Stephens's Milledgeville speech, published in the *National Intelligencer* and widely read throughout the country, came

at once to the attention of Abraham Lincoln, who wrote asking that a copy be sent him. Stephens answered at once, enclosing a copy of his speech. "The country is certainly in great peril," he said in closing the note, "and no man ever had heavier or greater responsibility resting upon him than you have in the present momentous crisis."

Lincoln wrote again. Because at the top of the page were the words "For your eye only," Stephens did not show the letter to any one until long after Lincoln's death.

"Your obliging answer to my short note is just received," wrote the President-elect, "and for which please accept my thanks. I fully appreciate the present peril that the country is in, and the weight of the responsibility on me.

"Do the people of the South really entertain fears that a Republican administration would, *directly*, or *indirectly*, interfere with the slaves, or with them, about the slaves? If they do, I wish to assure you, as once a friend, and still, I hope, not an enemy, that there is no cause for such fears.

"The South would be in no more danger in this respect, than it was in the days of Washington. I suppose, however, that does not meet the case. You think slavery is *right* and ought to be extended; while we think it is *wrong* and ought to be abolished. That, I suppose, is the rub. It certainly is the only substantial difference between us."

In replying to the letter, Stephens expressed his conviction that nothing was to be accomplished by force. Certainly, he pointed out, the difference of opinion concerning slavery had always existed. "In addressing you thus," he wrote, "I would have you understand me as being not a personal enemy, but as one who would have you do what you can to save our common country."

But Stephens himself had ceased to believe that the country could be saved. In his despairing mood, for a time he had been undecided whether or not he would allow his constituents to send him to the Georgia convention. "I am

inclined," he had written to Smith, "to let those who sowed the wind reap the whirlwind. It does seem to me that we are going to destruction as fast as we can." Perhaps deep down in his mind he had known all the time that he would attend the convention and make a last stand in favor of the Union. Certainly, his friends had never doubted the course that he would take.

Yet on November twenty-fourth, he dominated the convention in Taliaferro County. It was his speech that brought about the passage of resolutions against secession. When his constituents nominated him to represent Taliaferro at the state convention, he accepted without protest.

The next day he wrote a friend that he still believed the wrongs of the South could be redressed within the Union. "Revolutions are much easier started than controlled," he said, "and the men that begin them seldom end them. . . . Human passions are like the winds—when aroused they sweep everything before them in their fury. The wise and the good who attempt to control them, will themselves most likely become the victims. . . . When the moderate men, who are patriotic, have gone as far as they think right and proper, and propose to reconstruct, there will be found a class below them governed by no principle, but personal objects, who will be for pushing matters further and further, until those who sowed the wind will find that they have reaped the whirlwind. . . . Before tearing down even a bad government, we should first see a good prospect for a better."

During December he tried to concentrate upon his legal work. The days were cold and dismal, however, and for him utterly without hope. On December twenty-second Toombs sent from Washington the telegram that aroused his many followers in Georgia to still greater excitement:

"I tell you upon the word of a true man that all further looking to the North for security for your constitutional rights in the Union ought to be instantly abandoned. It is

fraught with nothing but ruin to you and your posterity.

"Secession by the fourth of March next should be thundered from the ballot box by the unanimous voice of Georgia on the second day of January next. Such a voice will be your best guarantee for liberty, security, tranquillity, and glory."

Two days before, South Carolina had seceded. In Atlanta guns had been fired at sunrise. Crowds had assembled on the streets. There had been a torchlight procession in the evening. Abraham Lincoln had been burned in effigy. The people were mad, thought Stephens. There was no chance that they would listen to reason. Yet, sitting in despair at Liberty Hall, he poured out his meditations to the few friends who seemed to him not to have completely lost their sanity.

In the various plans for compromise and adjustment, however, he could place little hope. The South, of course, would never agree to Douglas's scheme that involved sending the blacks to Africa. It was clear that the ultras in both North and South wanted redress, not compromise, not solution of the problem. Nowhere was there a ray of hope. "Mr. Buchanan has ruined the country," Stephens wrote to J. Henly Smith. "It is past praying for, I fear. His appeal to heaven was made too late."

Early in January Mrs. Toombs wrote, asking what disposition she should make of the furniture Mr. Stephens had left in Washington. "I have despaired of the Union," she said, "and will begin to pack up my things to-day. If you can do anything, you must be at it. I have given up the ship notwithstanding your old friends' opinion in a telegram of the morning papers."

Stephens had read the telegram. While he applauded Douglas's and Crittenden's urging the people not to give up the ship, not to despair of the republic, he was ready to agree with Mrs. Toombs that the ship was doomed. He had just written these views to Linton. South Carolina had not put

secession on the right ground, he had declared. The personal liberty acts passed by the North, in order to set aside the Fugitive Slave Act, were the South's greatest grievance. While he did not doubt the justice of secession, he did doubt its expediency.

Gloom had supplanted excitement in Georgia. One cold dripping morning in January, Alexander Stephens was called to the court-house where a hundred despondent, soaked, bedraggled men had gathered. He talked to them for an hour and a half in an effort to give to them a bit of hope. If the worst came, the South could defend herself. Yet the Union must be preserved if preservation were possible. When he sat down, some one called, "Three cheers for South Carolina!" There was no response, however, from the crowd.

On January sixteenth Alexander Stephens went to the convention, certain that the state would secede, yet determined to continue his fight in behalf of the Union. Judge Eugenius A. Nisbet introduced the ordinance declaring for immediate secession. The substitute resolution which Alexander and Linton Stephens drew and presented to the convention, asking the Southern States to come to Atlanta for a conference, was voted down. Strangely enough, the two leaders who stood by Alexander Stephens were Herschel V. Johnson and Benjamin H. Hill, men whom he had challenged to duels and whose refusals had added further insults to the injuries that had provoked his request for a gentleman's satisfaction. When Nisbet's resolution was passed, Alexander Stephens accepted appointment on the committee charged with the task of drawing up the ordinance of secession. When the convention elected him delegate to the congress of Confederate States, he agreed to be among those representing Georgia in Montgomery. He had lost his fight to preserve the Union that he had loved since boyhood days. To Georgia was due his first loyalty.

CHAPTER XV

A NATION IS BORN

FEBRUARY 3, 1861! Crawfordville was bleak and cold. Shivering groups of townspeople awaited the incoming train. Alexander Stephens was leaving for the meeting of the Confederate Congress, which would open the next day in Montgomery, Alabama.

Throughout Georgia people were certain that justice was on the side of the South and that the future would be bright for the country about to be born. Not far from Crawfordville at the town of Alexander in Grant County a little woman wrote the next day into her diary thoughts that she shared with the Georgians about her. Mrs. Oscar Shewmake she was—a native of England, whose father, Captain Francis Cornwall, had fought with Wellington at Waterloo and later had brought his family to America. She was one of the early graduates of Wesleyan at Macon, the college in behalf of which Alexander Stephens had spoken soon after he entered the legislature to represent Taliaferro County.

“To-day is an important era in our country’s history,” wrote Mrs. Shewmake on that memorable February fourth. “The first Southern Congress meets to-day at Montgomery. Our delegates are Toombs and Howell Cobb from the state at large, E. Nisbet, F. Burton, A. H. Stephens, Martin Crawford, A. R. Wright, T. R. R. Cobb, B. Hill, A. H. Kenan from the district.

“A nobler band of men could not be found in all the states. Intellect in no ordinary degree each one of them is possessed of, but this is not all. Most of them are men of piety and irreproachable morals. A little leaven leaveneth

the whole lump. We need not fear for the honor or reputation of our gallant state when such men are her representatives.

"May the good Lord who suffereth not a sparrow to fall without His observation take cognizance of our wants and supply these men with wisdom proportionate to their needs! May He overrule all things for good and make of us a great people, not great in the worldly sense merely—but a people eminent for faith and good works—a Gospel-loving and God-fearing people! May He incline the hearts of our former brethren to justice and promote peace between us! The clouds look threatening. Folly and fanaticism blind the eyes of those who are at the head of affairs. A domineering spirit influences them to desire to have their way or break asunder every tie that has hitherto bound us together. *We will not be ruled* by them. If they persist in their mad course, the consequences be upon their own heads!

"There is much poetry in the hitherto sectional attachment to the Union. It is like uprooting some of our holiest sentiments to feel that to love it longer is to be treacherous to ourselves and to our country. But we can love the past of our glorious country still, and remember her as a maiden does her mother. We can forget her faults and envy her virtues.

"The South has a glorious future in store if she acts with wisdom, justice, and moderation. There is room enough on this wide continent for more than one nation, and, God helping us, we will prove it!"

There might have been expressions of merriment, exultation and excitement at the station that February night had Mr. Stephens not looked so tragic. It was clear that for him the great drama about to be enacted bore no resemblance to comedy. As the train pulled in, the people looked eagerly through the windows to see the distinguished men and women who were aboard. Most of the Georgians they recognized, and the identity of the South Carolinians they could guess.

Alexander Stephens mounted the platform, waved his good-by and entered one of the coaches. In a few moments he was seated beside Colonel David Twiggs Hamilton. Just in front of him were Chesnut, of South Carolina, and his charming and witty wife, both of whom he had known in Washington. Behind sat Robert Toombs somewhat subdued by the accomplishment of his secession project. Aleck was glad that his year of conflict with Bob Toombs was at an end. Now again the two old friends were united in a common cause. It occurred to him, however, that the delegates en route to Montgomery, intent on the immediate problems confronting them, were not thinking of the dangerous consequences of their rashness. A great deal was being said about the organization of the new government, little about the war that was inevitable.

It was not long before Mr. Chesnut turned to Alexander Stephens.

"Mr. Stephens," he said, "the delegation from my state has been conferring and has decided to look to Georgia for a president."

"Well, sir," Stephens replied, "we have Mr. Toombs, Mr. Cobb, Governor Jenkins and Mr. Johnson. Any would suit. I would give my vote to any one of them."

"We are looking to you and Mr. Toombs," countered Chesnut. "No other names were mentioned, and the majority of the delegation favors you."

Alexander Stephens's face grew pale. It was with an effort that he spoke calmly in reply.

"No, that can never be," he said with emphasis.

Toombs, who had caught only a part of what had been said, leaned over the back of Stephens's seat.

"What is it, Aleck?" he asked.

"Come over here, Bob," Stephens directed. "You ought to hear all of this."

When Colonel Hamilton started to make place for

Toombs, Alexander Stephens laid a hand on his knee. So Mrs. Chesnut slipped away and gave Mr. Toombs her seat. Then Mr. Chesnut repeated the words he had just spoken.

"That settles it, Aleck," said Toombs. "You are the choice of the Georgia delegation. We have talked it over. So you must let us present your name to the convention."

For a moment Alexander Stephens seemed to be fumbling for words. The deadly pallor had not left his face. Perhaps he was moved by his old friend's magnanimity. It was generally thought that Toombs wanted the honor of the presidency. Certainly, he was the more logical man for the place, he who had been one of the moving forces in favor of secession.

"No, no," Stephens answered, gulping out the words. "I have not been in the movement. I was opposed to secession. I can not take any office under the government. It would not be judicious. It would not be good policy to put me forward for any position."

"Aleck," Toombs said with every evidence of beginning an argument, but Stephens would not let him speak. He merely laughed his dry shrill little laugh and changed the subject.

During the remainder of the journey, he managed to guide the conversation into other channels and to spend a great deal of time talking to Mrs. Chesnut. Here was an intelligent woman who could be of great value if she could be made to feel the seriousness of the situation. She showed, however, the impression the South Carolina spirit had made upon her. Now that the states had withdrawn from the Union, there was surely no danger of future trouble. Alexander Stephens assumed the task of setting her right. There would be a war—a terrible war, he told her. The South must do its utmost to foster a spirit that would lead to arbitration and not to continued combat. Mrs. Chesnut had a brain. It was gratifying that she

listened attentively to all he said. Moreover, Alexander Stephens had always liked clever women. Between him and them there was a kinship that he admitted without shame.

An hour after Stephens had arrived in his room at the Montgomery hotel there came a knock at the door. Willy P. Harris and Colonel A. M. Campbell were calling on him.

"The Mississippi delegation prefers you for president," one of them announced, "and we have come, Mr. Stephens, to see if you will allow us to present your name."

This time Alexander Stephens was not taken by surprise.

"Gentlemen," he replied at once, "I can not be candidate for the presidency of the southern Confederacy. I was opposed to secession. You must eliminate my name as a candidate for all offices. It would be bad policy to present my name."

Bending forward earnestly, Campbell continued:

"You are mistaken, sir. It would be good policy—the very best policy. You opposed secession. You had good reasons—weighty reasons, sir. The whole country, North and South, the whole world knows your reasons. You are the only man to whom the Unionists will give their cordial support. You are the only man who can take away from this movement the character of a rebellion."

"I think you do the Unionists an injustice, Colonel Campbell," Stephens replied.

There was a slight smile on his lips—less irritation in his voice.

"The men who opposed secession," he continued, "will be willing now ardently to defend their states. Is it true that Union sentiment is less strong in Mississippi?"

"No," said Colonel Campbell, "there has been little change recently, though it is certainly not so strong as it was when Mississippi defeated Jefferson Davis for governor and elected Henry S. Foote."

The men lingered for two hours, arguing valiantly.

When they left, Alexander Stephens had agreed to give their suggestion some consideration.

The next day there was a series of importunings. To Colin McRae and Judge Chilton, of Alabama, Stephens advanced the arguments that had begun to fall glibly from his tongue. The Alabamians had scarcely left his room when Keitt, of South Carolina, entered—the gentleman whom Mrs. Chesnut described as always interesting and entertaining. Alexander Stephens was amused to see the figure of Robert Toombs hiding just outside the door.

“You are the preference of South Carolina, and I am sent to ask you if you will serve,” Keitt began, launching into his argument without giving Stephens a chance to interpose his objections.

“Well,” Stephens replied at last, “if I should be the unanimous choice of the delegates, as well as of the states, and if I can organize a Cabinet with such concert of ideas as will justify the hope of success, I will take it, but on no other conditions.”

Then it was that Robert Toombs bobbed into the room. He was jubilant. Keitt seemed satisfied. Alexander Stephens, however, was far from happy. It seemed that there would never be materialization of his dream that had to do with retirement from public activity. On February second he had written Richard Johnston, “I shall go to Montgomery—do all I can to prevent mischief if possible—and if the new government shall be successfully launched . . . then I shall go into that retirement so congenial to my feelings.” Again he had expressed the belief that southern leaders were selfish, ambitious and unscrupulous. Certainly he had no desire to pilot the ship that was destined so soon to enter stormy waters.

Yet in the organization of the provisional government, Alexander Stephens was taking no small part. It was a sobered body of men who gathered in solemn conclave on

February fourth in Montgomery. Fiery secessionists were realizing that order must be brought out of the chaos they had created. After the opening prayer, by the nomination of Robert Barnwell Rhett, of South Carolina, Howell Cobb was elected president of the Congress. Hooper, of Alabama, was then made secretary.

Howell Cobb in a letter to his wife expressed his gratification that his speech on taking the chair was well received by the delegates. He admitted that Stephens's words of commendation pleased him especially, adding that Stephens, Wright, Hill and Kenan were now "as strong against reconstruction as any of us" and that both Stephens and Hill had made "strong speeches to that effect."

Throughout Georgia the people were proud of the part their state was playing in the organization of the new government. "To-day we have the news that our honored statesman, Howell Cobb," Mrs. Shewmake wrote in her diary on February sixth, "has been chosen president of the Southern convention. No one more pleasing to Georgians and more capable of discharging the duties of that position could have been selected. In this assertion I do not hazard my own judgment. It is but the echo of public sentiment."

Characteristically Stephens moved immediately upon the assembling of Congress that a committee of five be appointed to report rules for governing the body. The president named Stephens chairman and placed on the committee Keitt, of South Carolina; Curry, of Alabama; Harrison, of Mississippi; and Perkins, of Georgia.

"I made the motion," Alexander Stephens wrote his brother, "merely because the crowd generally seemed green and not to know how to proceed."

When the committee met in his parlor that evening, Stephens, of course, had the rules ready. Here was the chance of a lifetime to insure the handling of congressional business with order and dispatch. Though admitting that

he had culled from the rules of the United States Senate and House of Representatives, he added some entirely new regulations particularly to his liking. Then at ten that evening, after the report was agreed on, he found a printing office that would deliver fifty copies by noon the next day and paid the bill himself.

Stephens was also a member of Memminger's committee charged with drawing up a provisional constitution. The instrument, which was reported on February seventh, was essentially that which a few weeks later was adopted as the permanent Constitution of the Confederate States. Its basis was the Constitution of 1787. The preamble was clarified so that there could be no doubt that each state might act "in its sovereign and independent character." The presidential term was extended to six years with reelection prohibited. There were to be no taxes to foster any branch of industry. By special cause only could the president remove officers. Citizens could not sue one another in the Federal Courts. Slave property was to be respected, but the African slave trade was for ever prohibited. By call of three states amendments were to be considered by a convention of states. The vote of two-thirds of the states, meeting in convention, was required to ratify an amendment. Cabinet members were given seats in Congress and were permitted to discuss measures appertaining to their departments. The power of Congress over territories was settled in opposition to the doctrines of both the centralists and those in favor of "squatter sovereignty." It was Stephens, moreover, who proposed that seats in Congress be given Cabinet members. He advocated that the President be required to appoint his Cabinet from men elected to Congress, but he was overruled by the rest of the committee. He succeeded, however, in having appropriations limited to those requested by the executive or heads of departments.

When consideration of the provisions of the Constitution was before Congress, Stephens was alert to correct minor points that had escaped him in committee. He moved, for instance, to strike out as meaningless the words in the preamble "In the name of Almighty God." He opposed the suggestion of Chilton, of Alabama, that instead should be used "In the name of the Almighty who is the God of the Bible and the source of all rightful authority and rule." It was due to his influence that Georgia did not vote on Harrison's substitute that invoked "the favor of Almighty God." In article seventeen that had to do with the power of Congress and read, "to make all laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into execution the foregoing powers *vested* by this constitution *in* the Provisional government," Stephens moved that for the sake of avoiding future uncertainty, the word *vested* be changed to *expressly delegated* and the word *in* be changed to *to*. In former years he had witnessed trouble enough because of difference of opinion concerning the powers of Congress. The provisional Constitution was amended and unanimously adopted on February eighth. The next day was appointed for the election of officers.

That evening Alexander Stephens was in his room at the hotel, resting after the arduous work of the day, when there appeared a group bearing the earmarks of a delegation. It consisted of Toombs and the other Georgians, Keitt, Judge Chilton, Willy Harris, General Sparrow, and Henry Marshall, of Louisiana, Norton and Owen, of Florida. Toombs was radiant and, Stephens thought, handsomer than ever.

"Aleck," he said, "you are the choice of every man in Congress, and all of us are ready to pledge to help you form your Cabinet. There is only one point—those fellows from Virginia and the border states want you to promise to strike the first blow."

Alexander Stephens gazed steadily into the eyes of his friend. For a moment there was silence. Then Toombs continued:

"Those fellows say their states are hanging in the balance, ready to turn with the first blow. They know Buchanan will never dare to strike. They believe Lincoln will be as cowardly. Now they want the question settled in their states, and they want you, when the first opportunity offers—say, if the administration should attempt to reenforce or provision Fort Sumter—to strike the first blow."

For perhaps several minutes the two men faced each other, neither speaking—the mighty Toombs, to whom the adjective "leonine" had so often been applied, and Little Aleck, earnestly defiant.

"No, I will never strike the first blow," Stephens replied at last slowly and distinctly.

"Aleck!" roared Toombs.

The little man did not flinch. He merely looked into Robert Toombs's eyes in silent resolution. Then Toombs turned on his heel and strode from the room, the other men following him. Though Alexander Stephens stayed in his room, he knew that the various delegations held caucuses that lasted till daybreak.

Martin J. Crawford later reported that Stephens said to him after the departure of the delegates, "To make me president would be like taking a child out of the hands of its mother and giving it to a stepmother. Some one identified with the cause should be chosen. Yet if at the last we shall lose all, I do not care to survive the liberties of my country."

The next day by the unanimous vote of the delegates Jefferson Davis, of Mississippi, was elected president of the Confederate States and Alexander Stephens was elected vice-president. The two men had long known each other in Congress, but they had seldom agreed on important ques-

tions. In the old days Davis had been a Democrat, while Stephens was aligned with the Whigs. During the time that Stephens was fighting Tyler and Polk, Davis was making patriotic speeches upon the Mexican War. While Stephens was supporting the Compromises of 1850, Davis was fighting them. Davis had stood against Douglas's "Squatter Sovereignty" program and for protection of slavery in the territories. Indeed, he had been responsible for the plank in the Democratic platform that had brought about the schism at Charleston. While Stephens was trying to hold the South within the Union, Davis was advocating secession. The President and Vice-President of the Confederacy were a strangely mated team that should never have been harnessed together.

On February eleventh Stephens took his oath of office—before the arrival of Davis, who had to be summoned to Montgomery from his Mississippi plantation. "This, as you know, is my birthday," he wrote Linton that night, "and this day at the hour of one I was inaugurated." The coincidence affected him profoundly. It was as though his birth and the birth of the new country, in the destiny of which he was playing a major part, were supernaturally linked. A sense of responsibility was heavy upon him. The people expected a speech. Yet he believed that he should speak only briefly, leaving to Davis the task of outlining all governmental policies. Before leaving his room he carefully prepared his words of acceptance. "There was, I suspect," he wrote, "great disappointment at their brevity." Yet when it was all over, he was gratified to hear many of his friends say that he had done exactly right and that any other course would have been "injudicious, indelicate, and improper." As usual, the approbation of his fellows was vastly reassuring.

Plans for the organization of the provisional government were well under way before the President arrived. The

ten standing committees had been appointed upon motion of Stephens, and the organizing of the executive departments of the government had been entrusted to the Vice-President. In secret session it had been resolved that commissioners be sent abroad and to the government of the United States for the purpose of establishing friendly relations. A great deal of time had been consumed in discussions involving a flag and a seal for the newly formed confederation. One delegate after another had presented from his state models which the body was requested to consider.

Then on the evening of February sixteenth the President arrived. The next morning at ten o'clock Alexander Stephens, Robert Toombs and Martin J. Crawford called to pay their respects. Davis was not up, however.

Despite the differences of past years, the President and Vice-President saw each other frequently after Davis's inauguration. Aleck wrote Linton that the President was entirely confidential with him in all relationships.

Stephens was too busy during the days that followed and too burdened by responsibility and presentiments of coming disaster to enter into the frivolities in which the delegates engaged. There were those who seemed to view the Montgomery Congress as an opportunity to indulge their social ambitions. There were dinners and receptions where the wives of the delegates glittered in all their finery and where the men paid court to the assembled belles of the South. "I am occupied day and night. Never did I have such a heavy load of work upon my hands," Stephens wrote. "Greater difficulties surround us than I fully realized; perhaps I am more apprehensive in relation to their extent than I ought to be. I know I am much more so than the majority of those with whom I come in contact."

Though he strove in every way to avert war, he believed that it was imminent. Strange that the people could frolic and laugh and seem not to care! What a spectacle was

Jefferson Davis's inauguration! The President rode through the streets of the city in a coach drawn by four white horses, the people cheering wildly and throwing their hats in the air! It was time for sober thought and not for mad exultation. "It will require a great deal of patience, forbearance, patriotism on the part of the people to bear us successfully through the dangers that surround us."

When the President asked Stephens to head the commission to negotiate with Washington, he refused, for he believed that nothing could at the time be accomplished. "I declined because I did not think I could do any good," he explained. "I have no idea that Mr. Buchanan will recognize our government or enter into any treaty with us."

In the meantime Stephens was losing no opportunity to impress the people with the solemnity of the tasks secession had imposed upon them. He must have been a rather discordant note in the social gatherings that he attended. At Mrs. Toombs's reception, for instance, he talked again with Mrs. Chesnut. Here was an intelligent woman who could do much to turn the tide of frivolity. Since the journey toward Montgomery there had been other opportunities to enlist her cooperation. He had sat next her at a dinner and, instead of exchanging the pretty compliments that were the order of the evening, he warned her that danger was ahead. Among the gay crowd that Mrs. Toombs had invited he knew that he was the only cheerless person. It was a comfort that Mrs. Chesnut was willing to hear his story. Still, she called him half-hearted and accused him of looking back. Though it was difficult to continue a conversation with a charming woman, around whom many men flocked, talking their "frivle-fravle"—according to the description of their conversation that Mrs. Chesnut entered that evening in her diary—he held on. He wanted to make her realize that the future was important and that there should be less exultation over the recent successes of the new gov-

ernment. "He was deeply interesting, and gave me some new ideas as to our dangerous position," Mrs. Chesnut recorded.

The harmony that had characterized the early meetings of the Congress gave place shortly before adjournment on March fifteenth to discord that caused Stephens genuine apprehension. He had already written to Linton that "upon the whole, this Congress, taken all in all, is the ablest, soberest, most intelligent and conservative body" of which he had ever been a member. The strife that was beginning to develop caused him real alarm. It seemed to him that the Confederacy was in the position of a young man of talent and ability setting out in life. He was discovering among the members some bad passions and purposes, however. Above all things, harmony must be preserved.

So when he was requested to address the people of Savannah, there seemed to him no alternative but acceptance of the invitation. The address that he delivered on March twenty-first at the Athenæum was known throughout the country as the "corner-stone speech."

Mr. Stephens was introduced by C. C. Jones, mayor of Savannah. He had advanced to the front of the rostrum and had spoken only a few words before the clamor of those outside made it necessary for him to stop. The mob that could not get seats wanted to hear the words of the Vice-President. "Come out! Come out!" was the command from the doors. The mayor rose at once and said that Mr. Stephens's health would not permit open-air speaking. The speaker, however, declared his willingness to leave the decision with the audience. The result was that he remained within, while Colonel Lawton, Colonel Freeman, Judge Jackson and J. W. Owens attempted by impromptu addresses to quiet the furor. Alexander Stephens explained the details of the new Constitution. It was the old, he said, with the defects corrected. On the subject of slavery, he

explained, there was no essential change. "As Judge Baldwin of the Supreme Court of the United States announced from the bench several years before, slavery was the cornerstone of the old Constitution. So it is of the new." In his defense of the southern institution he reiterated much that he had said before concerning the natural subordination of the blacks to the whites. The man who had once been lukewarm in his defense of slavery was now receiving and sending out the currents of thought that circled about him. At the moment scarcely a man or woman in the South doubted that slavery was promoting the welfare of both blacks and whites and that the institution was part of the divine scheme upon which the universe was built. Over in Grant County Mrs. Shewmake was piously writing in her diary convictions that were firmly entrenched in the southern mind.

"By and by it will be understood," she wrote, "that the Southern master is not merely a power like steam to drive his machinery at will without reference to capacity or usefulness, but he is a skilful engineer who knows how to develop the motive power to a thing of immense advantage without disastrous results. The negroes in their natural state are a reproach to the Christian world. No humanizing influence has been exerted by the coast colonies of Africa. Even England with her boasted enlightenment has failed to redeem even a handful of their vast numbers from ignorance and degradation. . . .

"It is not to be doubted, as Robert Toombs remarked in substance to a Boston audience, that the very efforts of the Abolitionists to abolish slavery have delayed, if not entirely defeated, this consummation of their hopes. Their interference in the form of incendiary documents and disguised emissaries has caused the inaction of laws to prevent all literary culture and freedom of speech with the slaves as a class.

"Yet in spite of this, we are assured that they are more refined and better cultivated than their class at the North.

"It is certain that there is not so much want among them. They are the happiest laboring people on the globe. No one can doubt it who has studied them.

"This struggle of the South for independence will teach her people their true position, the importance of the peculiar institution, and the necessity for its maintenance. As anti-slavery sentiments lead to infidelity by proclaiming that 'higher law' doctrine which sets conscience above the revealed word, so a faithful discharge of our duties as slave owners will lead to a higher development of moral power and final and universal spread of the gospel civilization. God grant that we may be impressed with the deep responsibility resting upon us, and discharge our duties as in the very presence of the Just Omniscient Father!"

Though entrenched at the time by the southerner's belief in the rightness of slavery, Stephens was to discover later that his use of the term "corner-stone" in his Savannah speech had been unfortunate. Badly reported and widely circulated throughout the country, the address gave the North a chance to quote the Vice-President of the Confederate States as having said that the new government was built upon the corner-stone of slavery.

Events were hurrying too rapidly toward the catastrophe that Alexander Stephens had predicted for the days at Crawfordville to provide the rest that he needed. On April eleventh the Confederate government made its final demand for the surrender of Fort Sumter. Two days later began the bombardment by Confederate troops under General Beauregard. The evacuation of Fort Sumter was immediately followed by President Lincoln's first call for troops. Aleck Stephens was visiting Linton when he received from President Davis a telegram summoning him to Montgomery for conference. It was clear that a state of war existed between the United States and the Confederate States and that no time could be lost in organizing men and resources for the struggle. The strategic state of Virginia,

in which a convention had been sitting for weeks, must be brought in line. Stephens, it seemed, was the man to address the assembled delegates.

On April nineteenth he wrote Linton :

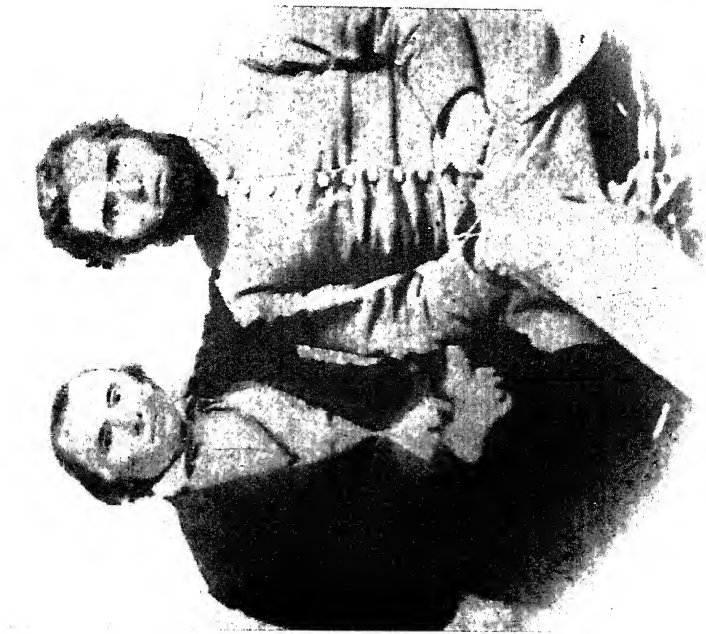
“In a few hours I am to start for Richmond. . . . I go to Virginia as a representative of this government in forming a treaty of alliance offensive and defensive between the government and that state. . . . I was strongly inclined not to accept the position, owing to my health and the apprehension that night travel might make me sick; but upon the urgent request of the President and all his cabinet, I have consented to go. The subject admits of no delay: Letcher telegraphed for immediate action.”

In the meantime Stephens was astounded that Lincoln actually contemplated a war of subjugation. It appeared that the President of the United States was acting without design or settled policy. What the outcome would be, he could scarcely predict.

At six o'clock on the morning of the twenty-second Stephens reached Richmond. Even at so early an hour the streets were crowded with people, some terrified, some excited, some exultant. The journey from Montgomery had been fatiguing in the extreme. He found North Carolina in a fever of excitement. Though it was Sunday when Stephens passed through the state, people had been gathered at all the stations, waving Confederate flags and demanding that the Vice-President speak to them. Stephens had acceded, of course. There seemed to be little strength left for the work he must accomplish in Virginia. Everywhere the people were fearing immediate attacks. Though Virginians had voted in favor of secession four days before, there was as yet no connection between their state and the Confederate government. During the day it became known that Lincoln had issued his order for blockading the southern ports.



LINTON STEPHENS AND NORA
The oldest daughter of Linton and
Mary Salter Stephens



VICE-PRESIDENT STEPHENS AND CAPTAIN LINTON STEPHENS
Of the Confederate Army

Stephens's address before the convention was clear and convincing, outlining as he did the policies of the new government and inviting Virginia to cast her lot with the Confederate States. There was irony in the appointment of ex-President Tyler to head the committee that would confer with the Confederate Vice-President. It seemed that the war was to be the means of throwing Stephens into close association with all the men whom he had opposed in other days.

Before conferring with Tyler, Stephens talked with General Lee, who had just been placed in charge of the twenty thousand Virginia soldiers then ready to defend the state. It seemed to him important that the General's compliance with his plan be secured before entering into negotiations with the committee appointed by the convention. Because Virginia had not been a member of the Confederation that had already commissioned its commanding officers, the General would of necessity be subordinate to others in higher command. Not knowing the man, Stephens was a trifle doubtful what his attitude might be under the circumstances. Accordingly, he invited General Lee to meet him at the Ballard House and explained the situation which he feared might cause embarrassment to his mission. Robert E. Lee, however, agreed at once that union with the Confederate States was in every way desirable. It was immediately clear to Stephens that the General had no personal ambitions. Whether he led the troops or whether he occupied the humblest position in the army, his concern was merely to serve the common weal.

The next day, however, when the Virginians on the committee saw that the articles that Stephens had brought from Montgomery made no provision for their General, they urged the necessity of an immediate change. Stephens, insisting that he was without power to grant the request, referred the Virginians to Lee himself, who persuaded them

that consideration for him must not stand in the way of their signing the treaty with the Confederate States.

While ex-President Tyler and Vice-President Stephens were negotiating their treaty, martial spirit was sweeping Virginia. The men of the state were rushing to arms. Fifteen thousand soldiers had been stationed in and around Richmond. "The work of my mission is in suspense before the convention," Stephens wrote to Linton on the morning of the twenty-fifth. "The Virginians *will* debate and speak, though war be at the gates of their city. . . . All I have said here, I am told, has been well received by both parties.

"My health holds up tolerably well; though I was very much relaxed and rather feeble the first two days. I am now stronger and better."

That afternoon the Virginia convention ratified the treaty that Stephens had drawn with Tyler. Armed with the documents, the Vice-President started for Montgomery. There was time for just one day in Crawfordville en route, for the President had called the Confederate Congress to convene in extra session on April twenty-ninth.

Though Alexander Stephens was still trying to hope that a general war might be averted, he agreed that preparations were immediately necessary. Into the task of laying the financial and military foundations of the new government he threw himself whole-heartedly, forgetting for a time his physical infirmities and working at a rate of speed that would have taxed a man of twice his strength. Arkansas seceded on May sixth. On the seventh Tennessee cast her lot with the Confederate States. On the twentieth North Carolina adopted her ordinance of secession. On the twenty-first Congress adjourned to meet next in Richmond. Two days later Virginia voters ratified the ordinance passed by their convention. As Union troops entered Virginia, the South was solidified by a common cause. War was at last a terrible actuality.

At his home in Crawfordville Alexander Stephens was very ill. After the long weeks of strain the reaction had come. Nevertheless, as he lay in his room or sat upon the side porch to which he dragged himself now and then, filled with gloomy forebodings, he turned over in his mind plans that should be immediately perfected. When Robert Toombs's letters ceased to be permeated by the hopeful spirit that had formerly characterized them, he wrote urging Linton to come to Liberty Hall. At a time like this he needed to be sustained by either Bob Toombs or Linton.

When Stephens arrived in Richmond for the convening of the third session of the provisional Congress, he found the excitement even greater than it had been on his former visits. A battle was about to be fought in northern Virginia. The population of the city had swelled far beyond its normal forty thousand. The Confederate government had brought its thousands of employees. There had been an influx from the surrounding country; and newly recruited soldiers were to be seen everywhere. The hotels were filled far beyond their capacities, with parlors converted into bedrooms and commanding high prices. Hungry mobs awaited their turns outside the dining-rooms. Everywhere people were anxious for news from Manassas. The morning of the twenty-first, the President, exercising his constitutional function as commander-in-chief of the army, left for the battle-field on a special train, carrying with him a volunteer staff. As dark approached, crowds became restless. By midnight there was news of victory. The exultant multitudes did not sleep that night. At last the sobering aftermath of triumph—there was demand for stretchers, for tourniquets and instruments; there were wild stories of death and suffering. The city that had not slept was seeking news of its sons. Yet every one was sure that the first great victory meant that war would soon be ended triumphantly.

Alexander Stephens, however, did not share the optimism

that pervaded the South. "We shall probably have before long several such fights as took place at Manassas on the twenty-first," he wrote Richard Johnston. "I have no idea that the North will give it up. Their defeat will increase their energy."

Linton had volunteered. Aleck, anxious concerning the safety of all the men in the army, was haunted by the fear that the brother whom he loved might be suffering, that he might be killed. A few days before leaving Crawfordville he had written Linton, "I have thought of nights on my bed how I could sleep if I knew you were on the cold ground in camp, with nothing but a blanket under you and a tent cloth to shut out the rain. . . . May God protect you wherever you go or whatever you do!" He could not make himself believe that the war would be short. He could not banish from his mind the suffering that it would cause.

CHAPTER XVI

INTERNAL DISCORDS

NO SOONER had Congress convened in Richmond than the discords that Stephens had sensed during the last days in Montgomery began again to assert themselves. Representatives of the people, Cabinet members and wives of both had been glad enough to move away from Montgomery. There was excellent chance that a summer in Richmond might be more bearable than the heat of the far South. Indeed, Mrs. Chesnut confided to her diary that the heat and poor hotel accommodations were entirely responsible for the move of the capital to Richmond, though Stephens had expressed the belief that Congress was actuated by a desire to be nearer the theater of war. "Our statesmen love their ease," the astute lady had commented, "and it will be hot here in summer." Then, too, every one wanted the gaiety possible in a larger city where social prestige was well established.

Richmond was headily gay. In Chimborazo Park and on Gamble's Hill and along Franklin Street, officers, resplendent in new uniforms, strolled beside hoop-skirted beauties, whose very curls danced with patriotism and excitement. When men were not fighting, they must be made happy. And who could bring about that pleasant consummation more skilfully than the belles of Virginia? Sewing circles invariably broke up in "danceable teas" and pretty heads were for ever planning balls, parties and theatricals that would take the minds of soldiers from the grim thought of war. It mattered very little whether the men left wives or sweethearts at home—in Richmond they must be made

happy. So, from the *passé beau* to the lad with down on his cheek, from the ancient bachelor to the young husband, the soldiers were entertained by the very most charming girls that Richmond had to offer to the great cause. Though the Vice-President of the Confederacy was on all important lists, and though he made himself entirely agreeable, he was finding it hard to be gay when he could see beyond the day to the suffering of to-morrow.

The bickerings began at once. Richmond women were exceedingly critical. Who indeed were these people who had suddenly come to occupy the center of the stage? The costumes of the official ladies, they declared, left much to be desired. As for Mrs. Davis, there was a rumor that on at least one side of her family she was not to the manner born. As a matter of fact, who could be quite right without ancestors that were rooted in the traditions of the Old Dominion? The men, too, were not above quarreling with one another. "And now I could be happy," wrote Mrs. Chesnut on July twenty-seventh, "but this Cabinet of ours are in such bitter quarrels among themselves—everybody abusing everybody else."

Alexander Stephens was not entering into the petty wrangles. He cared precious little for the social side of congressional life when large matters were before the country. Besides, he had no wife who must be recognized, and whose figure and clothes must be generally approved. He was concerned with two great questions that had to do with financing the new government and raising an adequate army. Constantly he was working upon a scheme that he believed would provide sufficient funds for carrying on the war. Foreseeing the blockade, he had suggested in Montgomery that the government give bonds for the purchase of cotton at ten cents a pound. With this in hand, it could then build iron-clad steamers in Europe. In these cotton could be sent over and held until the price rose, which

under the circumstances would be inevitable. The cotton, he believed, would yield enough to finance the war, and the steamers would keep the coast clear. Secretary Memminger, however, had plans of his own which Stephens did not approve and which certainly seemed to him to constitute no grounds for ceasing to press those that he thought more practical. Cotton was the great resource of the South. If it were properly utilized, victory was possible. Otherwise, financial troubles could not be averted. Still, the Secretary of the Treasury had gone blunderingly ahead, paying not the least attention to the advice that the Vice-President was willing to give and not to demand credit therefor. At Montgomery, Stephens advanced his plan hopefully. There were members of Congress who agreed with him that there would be a blockade and that cotton might be the means of saving the South if something were done at once to insure its crossing the ocean. Chesnut, of South Carolina, was easily converted to the plan, as were others from the various states. Yet what could South Carolina do in the face of the headstrong methods of Memminger? Nevertheless, there was a great deal of favorable talk that had at first encouraged Stephens. Mrs. Chesnut mentioned in her diary that the project met with her husband's support and that Mr. Chesnut spent a deal of time urging that immediate action be taken. "The very cotton we have now, if sent across the water, would be a gold mine to us," she wrote. Still, when every one was having an excellent time in Montgomery, delightfully isolated from the North, it seemed entirely unlikely that the Lincoln government would attempt subjugation and blockades and serious warfare. Besides, if there should be any real fighting, ample funds would be forthcoming from an enthusiastic people. Was not the patriotic loan, authorized February twenty-eighth and empowering the Confederacy to borrow fifteen million dollars, being quickly subscribed? There was plenty of time

to consider the words of the socially objectionable Cassandra who were marring the festivities with their gloomy prophecies. Then, when the blockade became an unhappy reality and when there was a war and when there were rumors of more war, Stephens's plan of sending cotton abroad appeared altogether impracticable. Still, the Vice-President knew that, blockade or no blockade, the wealth of the South was its cotton and that every effort should be made to get the staple to European markets. So he continued to preach the faith that was in him, though he must have known that his was a voice crying in the wilderness.

It had suddenly become difficult to get the President's ear on questions of policy. Davis was beset both by the multitudinous details involved in bringing order out of the governmental chaos that surrounded him and by the jealousy and contentions that had arisen in his Cabinet, in Congress and among his military officers. There was Toombs, for instance, with his powerful following, who had begun to argue in Montgomery the necessity of carrying the war into the enemy's territory. "We must invade or be invaded," he roared into every listening ear. The Cabinet was divided concerning the military exigencies. Congress had not known what to advise. Toombs, however, was declaring that if he had been in Davis's place, he would have taken the responsibility and ended the war speedily with an aggression that the North could not have withstood. It must have been a relief to the President when Toombs resigned his portfolio of state in July and became a brigadier-general. But R. M. T. Hunter, who succeeded Toombs, was not so pliable as the President would have liked to see him. "Mr. Hunter succeeds Toombs in the state department," wrote Jones in his *Diary of a Rebel War Clerk*, "and that disposes of him if he will stay there. It is an obscure place, and if he were indolent without ambition, it would be the very place for him."

Yet it seemed that nobody was without ambition, that nobody was willing to follow leadership in such a way as to assure the orderly conduct of the war. The very principle of state rights that had actuated secession was beginning to present an insurmountable obstacle in the raising of troops. On February twenty-eighth the provisional Congress had passed an act empowering the President "to assume control of all military operations in every state" and authorizing him "to receive from the states all the arms in their possession" and "to receive state troops who might be tendered or who might volunteer by the consent of their states." In other words, the principle of decentralization for which the South was fighting was being established paradoxically by the centralization that the states heartily detested. To the astute it was clear there was trouble ahead.

Mrs. Davis was doing her best to offset the President's taciturnity. Mr. Davis dropped in upon her daily "at homes," looking so thoughtful that he was almost austere, and saying little. Mrs. Davis, however, was playing her rôle to perfection—discussing the latest book, describing some earlier experience, telling some good story exceedingly well. It was Richmond's fault, not hers, that her popularity did not increase. Who was interested in books, stories and experiences? Conversation had to be personal in Richmond to be enjoyed. Varina Howell Davis did not know every one's aunts and grandmothers and cousins. Therefore it was hard for her to entertain ladies who were concerned with matters entirely genealogical. The bimonthly levees were notable failures. People came through curiosity and left to ridicule what they had seen.

Alexander Stephens, set apart from the gossips, was among those who were watching to see that the government was guilty of no usurpation of authority that remained vested in the states. He was spending a great deal of time and thought upon the problem that concerned itself with

arming the soldiers that had volunteered in satisfactory numbers.

The Confederacy had few arms and little ammunition. There was a small amount that had been secured after John Brown's raid, more that had been captured from the United States arsenals and forts, and throughout the South there was a supply of private arms that a frontier position had made necessary. Not only were the states not placing their arms in the hands of the government but were discouraging individuals from selling to the Confederate agents and were attempting to keep for their own use arms captured from the arsenals. Governor Brown, of Georgia, was holding on to what he had and trying to get as much more as he could from the Confederacy. Davis knew, of course, that Alexander Stephens, believing as he did in the sovereignty of the states and the importance of protecting all those rights which had not been delegated to the central government, was championing, though unobtrusively, the cause of the decentralists. Therefore, it is not strange that the confidential relationship that had existed during the first weeks in Montgomery should have given place to restraint between the two men.

Besides, when Congress convened in Richmond, the President was ill. Conjectures were rife as to what would happen in the event of his death. There were those who even went so far as to welcome the thought. Mrs. Toombs even suggested that Davis was not really sick but was pretending illness as a protection. "All humbug!" she would say. There was not even a good word for the effort Mrs. Davis was making to be agreeable to the ladies. Every one laughed at the functions over which she presided. "That reception, for instance!" scoffed Mrs. Toombs. "Was not that a humbug? Mrs. Reagan could have done better than that." So the women knitted and vilified one another and tore down the morale they claimed to be trying to build.

There seemed to be a distinct connection between the velocity of needles and tongues, the one weapon vying with the other in sharpness and the intricacy of the patterns woven. It was little wonder that there were too many socks and not enough of other comforts. One poor soldier complained that he had only one shirt and a dozen pairs of socks. Knitting was such a pleasure, for it scarcely interrupted the social functions with which the men and the women seemed never surfeited! What a chance had come to the leaders in Richmond! There was the pretty Mrs. Randolph, presiding over the charades that lasted all night. There was Hetty Cary, breaking men's hearts without any particular concern for the wives she was distressing. There was Mrs. Haxall, whom Mrs. Chesnut described as a "*ci-devant* beauty and belle," already beginning to dispense her delightful hospitality. When the weather became too hot, the ladies gathered at White Sulphur Springs, where the wives of the newly installed officials overheard the Virginians say a great many things that were quite discomfiting. Indeed, the social battles seemed as important as those that took place between northern and southern troops.

Alexander Stephens was trying to hear as little of the gossip as possible. Still, there was no way of escaping the letters from friends who occupied positions of importance. He was constantly serving people who came to him for help, and he had already begun his visits of mercy to the hospitals about Richmond. That he was alleviating suffering helped him to stand the hardships that the war was imposing upon his people. He who had never wanted to see an insect killed, who had given orders that no snake should be hurt on his plantation unless it was known to be dangerous to the lives of people, felt that in a measure he was responsible for the agony and death and warfare. At least, he had not been able to avert the calamity, and he was now one of those at the head of the government that

was in mortal combat. The people were grateful to him for all he was doing at the hospitals. "Remember me to Ellick," Thomas W. Thomas had written to Linton. "Say to him how much I am grateful to him for his kindness to the sick."

There seemed to be deplorable laxness in all the departments, as though none realized that a state of war existed. Passports, for instance, were being issued indiscriminately to people who went north, carrying full knowledge of southern defenses and who had gleaned much information concerning military projects. Thoroughly out of key with the Cabinet and finding the President inaccessible, Stephens resorted to protests made to minor officials whose influence might be effective. Perhaps it was indiscreet to discuss the situation with a clerk in the war office. Yet there was a chance that mild agitation would do good. Therefore he suggested to Jones that something should be done to cut down the number of passports daily issued. Stephens added his belief that the country was not in a prosperous condition. Therefore, all facts should be safeguarded. Jones was an intelligent fellow whose words might have weight with men higher up. At least, one could not be expected to be silent when policies were rushing the country toward disaster.

Daily, too, the unrest of the people was being brought to him through letters. It had not been possible to prevent Toombs's entering the army. Robert's brother, Gabriel, had been right in his efforts at dissuasion. There would be trouble, of course. Yet who could do anything with Bob once the stubborn fellow had made his decision? For ever the discord at the camps was being brought to the Vice-President. In October Thomas W. Thomas wrote from Camp Pine Creek near Fairfax that when Davis reviewed the soldiers there was not a cheer, even though some one asked for it. No system and policy existed, Thomas said. The temper of the army was not good. Then only a few

days later came other complaints from Colonel Thomas. "All governments are humbugs," he averred, "and the Confederate government is not an exception. Its president this day is the prince of humbugs. . . . I do know that he possesses not a single quality for the place save integrity. . . . Imbecility, ignorance, and awkwardness mark every feature of his management of this army. He torments us, makes us sick, and kills us by appointing worthless placehunters to transact business for us."

Stephens was distressed. With such a spirit among the officers, there was little chance of victory. He would do all he could among his friends to quiet the complaints that could do only harm. His letter to Thomas was unavailing, however. His friend merely said that he was sorry to have pained Stephens. "You tell me to have patience, heroic patience," he exploded. "There is nothing heroic about me . . . but I have been patient and still am. May God prolong your life for my country's sake!"

Yet Alexander Stephens was feeling that he could do little to help. The Congress that had adjourned on August thirty-first had been ineffectual. The affairs of the government were in the hands of the Cabinet, whom Stephens did not believe competent to direct the great issues before the Confederate States. The theater of the war was in the meantime being widened. The defeat of the Union army at Manassas had, as he had predicted, been the means of starting new endeavor at the North. Skirmishes continued in Virginia and West Virginia. There was fighting in the Mississippi Valley. In August the taking of Hatteras and in November the capture of Port Royal in South Carolina by the Union navy made the blockade more effective. It looked as though the war was settling into a long conflict, the outcome of which could not be foreseen. Recognition by European powers daily became less probable. Commissioners Mason and Slidell had not reached England and were now

being held as prisoners of war. In December Thomas W. Thomas, on leave in Georgia, wrote Stephens that "Mr. Davis and the peculiar people he trusts have given cause to every gentleman in the Army to mutiny." Indeed, he said that large numbers of the soldiers were complaining and thinking of a compromise by going back and that nine-tenths would vote for peace. In reply Stephens urged loyalty to the administration. Whatever Davis's faults might be, he argued, the man still had the public confidence. Therefore, success of the cause was impossible if he was dislodged. Gradually, however, Stephens began to believe that he was wrong. Governor Brown was distrusting the President. Thomas's letters became more rabid. Toombs was writing in a most incendiary manner. The *Charleston Mercury* had begun its opposition to Davis—as Barnwell said, even before the President had a chance to do wrong.

As 1861 drew toward its close, much of the first zeal had waned. The men in the army, who had volunteered for one year, were looking longingly toward home. The provisional Congress tried to meet the emergency by offering a fifty-dollar bounty and a two-month furlough for two- and three-year enlistments and for enlistments for the entire period of the war. Indeed, the fifth session of the provisional Congress, which lasted from November 18, 1861, to February 17, 1862, devoted almost all its time to recruiting the army.

Then on February eighteenth the first permanent Congress convened. Four days later, on Washington's birthday, Jefferson Davis and Alexander Hamilton Stephens, who on November 6, 1861, had been unanimously elected President and Vice-President of the permanent government, were inaugurated.

The ceremony was simple but impressive. The Capitol Square was thronged with people who shivered beneath a downpour of rain and warmed their hands by constantly

applauding. At twenty-five minutes past eleven members of the Senate proceeded to the hall of the House of Delegates accompanied by governors of the Confederate States, army officers and members of the Judiciary. Then solemnly Congress filed through the eastern door of the Capitol to the statue of Washington, where a temporary awning and platform had been placed. There Jefferson Davis delivered his inaugural address and took the oath of office administered by Judge J. D. Halyburton. R. M. T. Hunter, president pro tempore of the Senate, administered the oath to Alexander Stephens. "Speech, speech!" cried men from the four corners of the square. Stephens, however, bowed in solemn silence and returned to his seat. Then the President, the Vice-President and the members of the two houses returned to the Capitol and adjourned immediately.

That evening there was a gloomy reception at the mansion. The rain poured in torrents; the air was raw and cold. Though guests made every effort to be gay, the chill in the atmosphere could not be overcome—certainly not by the President who seemed a trifle stiff and ill at ease, certainly not by Mrs. Davis, who had not yet learned to accept with equanimity the attitude of Richmond toward the stranger within its gates. The permanent government of the Confederate States of America had been established nevertheless.

Alexander Stephens was not looking hopefully toward the future. Forts Henry and Donelson had fallen; Nashville and Memphis were threatened by the invaders; the army of the defense was retreating toward the boundaries of Mississippi and Alabama; New Orleans had fallen; Roanoke Island, the key to the Sound country, had been captured by the naval forces and the Burnside expedition. Men must be added to the Confederate army. It was said Davis favored conscription. Stephens was fundamentally opposed. In the first place, the central government did not

have the power, he thought, to enforce such a mandate upon the states. In the second place, if the military operations were properly conducted, and if the confidence of the people were kept, it would not be necessary to compel men to fight. Certainly at the beginning of the war there had been sufficient response to the call for troops. The South was fighting to maintain not only national independence but personal liberty. The ardor of the people must not be checked by the sort of compulsion that they would surely resist. Before leaving Georgia, Stephens had grown apprehensive because of the popular attitude toward the central government. With the coming of spring, Toombs wrote discouragingly of conditions in the army. "Davis seems determined to perpetuate inefficiency, in the Navy and post office departments especially," he said. "We shall get our independence, but it will be in spite of him."

There was a general demand for a new secretary of war. It appeared for a time that the portfolio would be offered to General Lee. "I think well of him as a prudent, safe, and able general, but I do not think he will make a good war minister," Stephens wrote Linton on February 26, 1862. "Toombs, I think, would make the best in the Confederacy. . . . The message of the President sent into Congress yesterday surprised me. It is not such a paper as I or the country expected. But we have to bear what we can not mend. . . . The present Congress is not what I would wish to see it, either in the Senate or in the House."

As Stephens had expected, Hunter resigned his post as secretary of state. That was in February. William M. Browne was appointed ad interim, to be succeeded March eighteenth by Judah P. Benjamin. Davis wanted a premier whom he could control. Certainly from his point of view the choice of Toombs had been a mistake. Then, Hunter had not been acquiescent. The rapid turn-over in the Cabinet looked inauspicious. In scarcely more than a year four

secretaries of state, four attorneys-general, and two secretaries of war! Benjamin, in spite of all opposition, was being tried everywhere. As surely as there was criticism of him in the position he occupied at the moment, Davis would defy public opinion by promoting him to a place of greater responsibility. Galling under a sense of ineffectualness, Stephens was both angered and saddened by the situation.

Although he was prepared for the conscription law that passed on April 16, 1862, he was not reconciled to it, nor did he cease to fight what he thought to be fundamentally against the liberty in which he had always believed. According to the law, all men between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five might be drafted into the service. Because nine-tenths of the men in the state organizations were immediately affected, new companies had to be formed for local protection. The governors became excited and troublesome. As early as March fifteenth Governor Joe Brown had voiced before the Georgia convention his protest against the contemplated legislation, declaring that Georgia had not surrendered her right to protect herself when she joined the Confederacy. Though the press was divided on the subject, many newspapers were violently condemnatory. In Congress Davis's opponents were becoming outspoken. Benjamin H. Hill, who was upholding the President's policies, and William L. Yancey, of Alabama, who was attacking the administration, were the actors in an ugly little drama when Yancey accused Hill of having made a statement that he knew to be false and Hill threw an inkstand that gashed Yancey's cheek with a broken edge of glass.

While the battle raged, Alexander Stephens did not hesitate to state his position. He thought that the Confederate government had authority to make requisition upon the states only when it needed more men than it could raise by voluntary enlistments and that the states should do whatever drafting became necessary. Yes, he replied to those who

asked his opinion, he considered the conscription act very bad policy. Linton, however, in stating the case in stronger terms, was known to be expressing the conviction of his brother. The essence of conscription, he said publicly, was "the right to take away the fighting men of the states against the wills of both the citizens and the states." Sovereign states could not be coerced in that manner even "though all the judicial tribunals on earth should affirm that they could."

The *Athens Banner* reflected the sentiments of many Georgians when it said that the people, while agreeing that perhaps conscription had become necessary, blamed the "criminal dilly-dallying while the Philistines were coming upon us." Herschel Johnson, however, though opposed on principle, waived his objections and said that he had yielded to conscription with "cheerful acquiescence."

When martial law was declared soon after the permanent Congress convened, Stephens was more than ever fearful that liberty was about to vanish from his world. Recourse to the writ of *habeas corpus* he had thought to be every freeman's right. The suspension by Lincoln in parts of the North, he had welcomed as a means of showing the people to what extremes an autocratic government might go. He had been pleased by that part of Davis's inaugural in which the President had said that "through all the necessities of an unequal struggle, there has been no effort on our part to impair personal liberty or the freedom of speech, of thought, or of the press," and that "the courts have been open, the judicial functions fully executed, and every right of peaceful citizens maintained as surely as if a war of invasion had not disturbed the land." Then, on February twenty-seventh Congress enacted a law authorizing the President to declare martial law in such districts as he thought in danger of attack; and on March first, scarcely a week after the utterance of Davis's brave words, martial law had been proclaimed in and around the city of Richmond, and the writ of *habeas*

corpus had been suspended. All along Stephens had been watching the effect of Lincoln's policies upon the North. Whenever the Republican administration had been criticized, he had hoped there would be a revolution that would bring about peace. He had believed that it would be possible to demonstrate the principles for which he thought the South was fighting. Now that the Constitution was being violated by the administration and that the individual citizen was losing the privileges and the rights that had been secured by that instrument, he felt that the prop upon which he had been leaning had suddenly given way. He was gratified that the people did not submit docilely. There can be no doubt that Stephens used his influence against the law wherever he thought a word would be effective. He felt, when the law was limited on April nineteenth to thirty days after the next meeting of Congress, that his protest had not been unavailing.

When Congress agreed to the impressment of supplies that were needed for the army, Stephens was sure that individual rights had been further jeopardized. Patriotism should prompt the people to contribute to the needs of the soldiers or to sell their property to the country, but the government was going too far, he thought, to force a man to part with that which belonged to him and which he should be able to dispose of according to his pleasure.

So rather hopelessly he read Robert Toombs's violent letters. From a camp near Richmond his friend wrote him on May seventeenth that the Confederate troops could have advanced to defeat McClellan had orders not gone wrong. "This is generalship!" he raged. "Davis's incapacity is lamentable; the very thought of the baseness of the impressment act makes me sick. I feel but little like fighting for a people base enough to submit to such despotism from such contemptible sources."

Alexander Stephens was in Crawfordville when the letter

reached him. It had seemed utterly useless to remain in Richmond where he could accomplish nothing. Perhaps it would be better for the country if he should withdraw his presence from the center of political activities. So he returned to Liberty Hall, got his faithful dog Rio from the custody of Thomas W. Thomas, and tried to restore some degree of mental equanimity. He felt that, like Rio, he had seen his best days. The dog was blind now and wobbly on his poor legs. Stephens found a lotion that seemed to soothe Rio's eyes and kept the dog with him constantly. He wondered if Rio remembered the time when he would gaily await the incoming trains and then sniff from coach to coach in search of his master. He wondered, too, if in canine old age there was a baffling sense of futility that came to men during senescence. Rio was sick now, and so was the master. Stephens and the dog attempted to comfort each other.

There were other friends, however, at Liberty Hall, who kept the conversation upon war and politics. Richard Johnston, who had returned to his home in Hancock County near by, came often. With Johnston Stephens was free to express the thoughts that were passing continually through his mind. The Congress was very poor, he said. In the House there were few men of ability; in the Senate only two or three. Tom Semmes was the ablest. Next came Barnwell, Hunter and Clay. Like Toombs, Stephens admitted that he was opposed to the West Point policy that seemed about to prevail. The energy that the South was showing now was like that of a turtle with fire on its back. The policy of the government was far against his judgment. Because of the difference he was frequently embarrassed. Constantly he harped on conscription. There would be heavy fighting in the next few months, in which the spirit of the volunteer would be needed. "Conscripts will go into battle as a horse goes from home; volunteers as a horse goes toward home: you may drive the latter, and it does not hurt

him. . . . But the day for a vigorous policy is past. It is too late to do anything. I fear we are ruined irretrievably."

What stupendous ignorance of the value of cotton the South had evinced! In the opinion of the government, cotton had constituted a political power, while its real power was merely commercial. If the plan he had suggested had been adopted, how different would have been the results! Cotton had now risen in value. It would have been the means of financing the Confederacy. And the iron-clad ships that should have been built before the days of the blockade would have kept the ports open. With the portal system closed, the country would die of strangury.

All this he said to his friend. From the public, however, he hid his despair. At least once he addressed the people, urging continued energy and sacrifice. The government was right in insisting that farmers should plant more foodstuff and less cotton. He did not approve Toombs's stubbornness in ordering that a full crop of cotton should be planted on his land, and he was sorry to read his friend's telegram in reply to the Georgia committee, though he understood that it had been occasioned by the high-handed methods of the impressment agents. The words were, of course, characteristic of Toombs: "Your telegram has been received. I refuse a single hand. My property as long as I live shall never be subject to the rules of those cowardly miscreants, the commissioners of Randolph County and Eufala. You may rob me in my absence, but you can not intimidate me."

June brought hope to the saddened southerners. The Seven Days' Battle was fought, and Richmond was no longer closely besieged by the invaders. Yet Toombs, writing on July seventeenth of the victory over McClellan, was not in good spirits. "The loss was terrible," he said, "and the men fought without skill." Longstreet, he considered an excellent general. "Stonewall Jackson and his troops did little or nothing," he added, "and Lee was far below the occasion. If

we had had a general in command, we could easily have taken McClellan's whole command and baggage. . . . I shall leave the Army the instant I can do so without dishonor. . . . Davis and his Janissaries conspire for the destruction of all who will not bend to them, and avail themselves of the public danger to aid them in their selfish and infamous schemes."

Though Stephens knew Toombs well enough to discount much that he said, there were other influences at work to make him feel that the policies of Davis were not inspiring the people with confidence. He was seeing Governor Brown often, in whose flesh the conscription act was a thorn not to be endured with fortitude and in silence. Outwardly he had acquiesced. Inwardly he was revolting violently. The clause permitting substitutes, moreover, was giving the state a great deal of trouble. According to its provisions, non-commissioned officers and privates might with the permission of their captain procure substitutes, provided no company should receive more than one substitute a month. After the conscription act and before enrolment, a great many Georgians had volunteered in the new regiments organized under authority already granted. Then they had found substitutes who they thought would be allowed to continue in their places after the enrolment of conscripts. Later, difficulties had arisen. At Brown's suggestion Alexander Stephens wrote to G. W. Randolph, then secretary of war, attempting to straighten out the tangle.

"The enrolling officers," he explained, "now hold these parties subject to service notwithstanding they have substitutes in their places, upon the grounds that not more than one substitute per month could be received in any company. This is deemed hard and oppressive. I suggest to you that instructions be given to Major Dunwoody that all persons in this state liable to conscription shall be exempt who honestly and bona fide have substitutes not liable to conscription."

It was the clear intention of the act, he added, that substitution be allowed. If the men had waited for enrolment, it was obvious that they could have presented their substitutes. He cited instances of men whose brothers were in the war, who could not be spared from dependent families, and who had procured substitutes at high rates. "It would certainly be hard now," he argued, "to require these men to go into service or to procure another substitute."

The military successes of the summer, however, were sufficiently encouraging for Stephens's spirits to be raised for a time. Therefore, despite all his misgivings that concerned the internal affairs of the Confederacy, he returned to Richmond the middle of August, ready again to do what he could for the country. His hope, however, of being able to see the President at once was soon dissipated. Davis continued immured with his Cabinet and could talk with no one else.

In the meantime Stephens was hearing distressing news from his friend. For supposed or real usurpation of power, Longstreet had ordered Toombs's arrest. Toombs's request to be relieved from following the army during arrest was granted. Next morning, however, when cannonading began, the deposed General sent Longstreet an explanation of his apparent usurpation and asked that the arrest be suspended that he might fight with his brigade. This, he had been informed by Generals Wilcox, Evans and Pryor, was the usual course pursued under the circumstances. "Unfortunately for me," he wrote Stephens, "when I got up to my brigade, it raised a loud cheer, which so incensed the magnates, Lee and Longstreet, etc., who were nearby, that I got no reply to my request, but was ordered peremptorily to this place (camp near Gordonsville) and two charges put against me for breaking my arrest and disobeying orders in not immediately coming here."

He closed the letter by expressing his belief that a quick

march to Maryland would cause Washington to be evacuated and end the war.

Stephens was busy at once, trying to help his friend out of the sort of difficulty a man of Toombs's temperament could not escape under the pressure of military discipline. He wrote Mrs. Toombs that he was at work in her husband's behalf. Toombs was still at Gordonsville. How long he would remain, there was no way just now of telling. He had thought at first it would be for only a day or so. With a sense of relief, he soon learned that Toombs had been restored to his command.

At the same time, though unable to reach the presidential ear, he was busy talking to congressmen about the dangerous tendency of merging all power and authority in the military. Many of the impressment orders, he argued, were without the shadow of authority. The establishment by Van Dorn of martial law in parts of Mississippi, with stringent laws abridging the freedom of speech and of the press, and Bragg's proclaiming of martial law in Atlanta enraged him. The time had come, he thought, for a man who believed in liberty to act. Therefore, he called upon the secretary of war and secured from him the promise to forbid the use of force. In the Senate Semmes seemed the man most likely to give effective cooperation. Stephens persuaded him that no power in the country could establish martial law, that Congress could go no further than the mere suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus*. The upshot was that Semmes introduced in the Senate a resolution requiring the judiciary committee to report upon the question. "The committee is now at work," Stephens wrote Linton, "and matters are progressing favorably. I am unremitting in my efforts in a calm and dispassionate manner to get Congress to awaken to the heavy responsibility resting upon them at this crisis to save our constitutional liberties; and I am glad to say that my efforts thus far have met with more success than I an-

ticipated when I saw the general apathy prevailing at first."

An interview with the Secretary of War made Stephens feel that it might be possible to defeat Davis's recommendation that the age limit for conscripts be raised to forty-five. He was pleased with Randolph, chiefly because the Secretary expressed himself as opposed to the higher age. If more troops were wanted, he said, he would be in favor of calling on the governors of the states. The President, moreover, had not consulted him before preparing the message in which he had advocated another conscription act.

As the days wore on Stephens became less sanguine concerning the possibilities of getting Congress to resist the policies of the President. The representatives, he decided, were ignorant of principles. "You may impress an idea upon their minds," he said, "get a full assent; they may appear to see clearly and after meeting with some literary man who himself has no knowledge upon the subject, he will suggest some imaginary case which knocks all your reasoning out of the weak head that once thought it saw the truth. . . . The whole ground had to be gone over again with these children in politics and statesmanship."

Stephens was obviously not enjoying his position as lobbyist in the Halls of Congress. He had been accustomed to the limelight when he advocated a principle. Now he was a man of no importance, disapproving all that was done and powerless effectively to oppose trends that he considered dangerous to all for which he had stood. The hopefulness that had lasted throughout the summer was supplanted by new fears. After the battle of Antietam, Lee abandoned his offensive movement into Maryland and returned to Virginia. On September 17, 1862, in a frenzy of fear, Congress passed the second Conscription Act, which drafted into the service all white men between the ages of eighteen and forty-five. Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation of September twenty-second in the eyes of foreign nations changed

the character of the war. It was not merely two systems of government that were in conflict: a war was being waged on a high moral issue to free an oppressed people from its long and cruel bondage. Lincoln's clever stroke took from the South all hope of receiving recognition or help from abroad. With a number of embryonic plans taking shape in his mind, Alexander Stephens returned to Georgia around the first of October. He was doing no good in Richmond. Perhaps something might be accomplished among his own people.

CHAPTER XVII

THE VICE-PRESIDENT OPPOSES THE PRESIDENT

DURING October Alexander Stephens had time to think through his problem and reach a conclusion that was destined to guide his actions during the remaining years of the war. He had never been interested in the establishment of a separate southern Confederacy. He had loved the Union that had been built from the Constitution of 1787. For the principles therein set down and as interpreted by him he had been willing to make sacrifice after sacrifice. It was only when the preponderance of the people of the North had violated the essence of the Constitution that he had at last joined the party of the South. He had never believed that under the leadership his section had produced there was a chance of perpetuating constitutional liberty. Yet when he saw that the United States was tending toward a centralization and an autocracy that took sovereignty from the states and liberty from the individual and when the course of events had convinced him that there was no chance of getting the men who believed in the original intent of the Constitution to continue to fight within the Union, he had joined with his state, hoping to see the new government established upon the principles that he believed to be just and sound. Never had he been fighting primarily for the South. Always he had been actuated by an idea and an ideal. Gradually he had come to see that patriotism was sweeping the people away from the principle into the war itself. To him there could be no justification for the war unless the fight was made to preserve liberty.

The trend toward centralization that had been steadily becoming more pronounced in the Confederacy and that was taking more and more power from the states, conscription, the suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus*, martial law, impressments—had robbed him of all interest in the success of the southern cause.

“There is nothing that has given me half so much concern lately as these same military orders and usurpations,” he had written Richard Johnston just before leaving Richmond. “Not the fall of New Orleans or the loss of *The Virginia*. Better, in my judgment, that Richmond should fall and that the enemy’s armies should sweep our whole country from the Potomac to the Gulf than that our people should submissively yield obedience to one of these edicts of one of our own generals.”

He felt that under the guise of war insidious influences were at work to destroy free government. “The North to-day presents the spectacle of a free people having gone to war to make freemen of slaves, while all they have as yet attained is to make slaves of themselves. We should take care and be ever watchful lest we present to the world the spectacle of a like free people having set out with the object of asserting by arms the correctness of an abstract constitutional principle, and losing in the end every principle of constitutional liberty, and every practical security of personal rights.”

Though Alexander Stephens had lost faith in the leaders, he still believed that there was hope that the people might be awakened to a sense of their responsibility in preserving the form of government for which their forefathers had fought. All his life he had been defending constitutional liberty. Even when his country was at war, he saw no reason to relinquish either convictions or the right to uphold them. Since the capital of the Confederacy had been moved to Richmond, Davis had not called the Vice-

President into conference. Because his counsel was neither sought nor accepted when given, there was no reason why he should not attempt to mold public sentiment among the people themselves.

Besides, there was yet a chance that the peace groups in the North and those who were opposing the very policies of Lincoln that Davis was emulating might be brought into contact with open-minded southerners to the end that war be honorably terminated. So Stephens in Georgia made bold to expound the faith that was in him.

On the third of October he published a strong letter in which he maintained that no power existed, derived either from the Constitution or acts of Congress, by which martial law could be declared. All punishments inflicted by military officers upon civilians he declared to be illegal. The letter was widely read, he knew, and he gathered that it had not only produced a profound effect upon the country at large but had proved disconcerting to the leaders who had stood behind the usurpations it condemned. A few days later he had the gratification of seeing that the Senate, over which Hunter was presiding in the Vice-President's absence, had passed resolutions, embodying the gist of his letter to the press.

On the first of November Stephens addressed a meeting of citizens in his own county called to solicit supplies for the soldiers. The cause of the South was just, he said. He made clear, however, what that cause was and must continue to be. The war was being fought "for home, for fireside, for our altars, for our birthrights, for property, for honor, for life—in a word, for everything for which freemen should live and for which all deserving to be freemen should be willing, if need be, to die." He explained the plan for financing the war by means of the cotton crop of the South. Though the ports were now closed, he believed there was yet a chance to run the blockade with suc-

cess sufficient to send some cotton to Europe. Similarly, he spoke in various other parts of Georgia. If he could not be of assistance in Richmond, he could help to keep before the people the fundamental causes underlying the war.

Stephens was seeing Governor Brown now and then and hearing from him frequently. The Governor's acquiescence toward the first conscription act had given place to violent opposition to the second. He refused to allow enforcement until the legislature had convened and deliberated upon it. When the Georgia Supreme Court upheld the act that winter, Stephens remained unconvinced as to its constitutionality. Quoting from Hamilton and Madison, he advanced such technical arguments as to perplex the people before whom he talked. Still, every one knew that the Vice-President was opposing the President. The effect on the country was far from good and far from pleasing to Davis and his Cabinet.

Linton Stephens spoke before the legislature in opposition to the law, saying that if the fighting men could be taken against the will of the state, sovereignty was gone. "To speak of such is mockery; it is insult added to injury and robbery." He would have Colonel Flood and his forty thousand militiamen ordered to Savannah under Georgia's "retained right" of keeping troops in time of war for her own protection. There was no doubt in the minds of the people that Alexander Stephens not only approved what Linton said but had gone over with him the substance of the address.

Though the Georgia legislature voted to uphold the law, because of the exigencies of the war, it protested against the principle by passing resolutions which Linton had presented after consultation with his brother.

Toombs attributed the action of the legislature in permitting conscription to be put into effect in Georgia to the

spineless Know-Nothings, whom he had in a moment of careless generosity allowed to get into power. He ought to have known, he scolded himself, that they would support the administration. "They are a terribly whipped set of scoundrels and are afraid even to do right lest they may be thought to be what they really are—traitors to public liberty."

Brown discussed with Stephens his alarm that the second act should take men from the state immediately after Lincoln's proclamation had emancipated the negro. He was fearing that there might be uprisings that would endanger the women, children and older men who had been left at home. When he declared that "no act of the government of the United States prior to the secession of Georgia struck a blow at constitutional liberty so fell as has been struck by the conscription act," Alexander Stephens heard the voicing of his own convictions. In a recriminating correspondence, behind which Davis must have detected the hand of Stephens, he sent the warning that Georgians would "refuse to yield their sovereignty to usurpation and would require the government, which is the common agent of the states, to move within the sphere assigned it by the Constitution."

The very wording of many of Brown's letters to the Secretary of War smacked so strongly of Stephens that there must have been no doubt in Richmond that the trouble the recalcitrant Governor was giving the authorities could be attributed to the Vice-President who remained at his home in Georgia because he was opposed to practically every major policy of the Confederacy. Indeed, the *Savannah Republican* said that Brown was being put forward as the tool and exponent of far shrewder men than he. It was known that Alexander Stephens often stayed at the executive mansion in Milledgeville and that he frequented the lobbies of the two houses, watching the proceedings.

Brown was for ever finding some new subject for contention. From the beginning he had objected to the state regiments not being allowed to select their own officers. In the spring of 1863 he actively brought forward the issue when Colonel Slaughter, of Georgia, was killed and the commanding officer appointed his successor. Three Georgians, it became known, were keeping the government in hot water: Stephens, the Vice-President, organizing no opposition but talking and writing a great deal; Toombs in the army, criticizing the military program; and Brown, governor of one of the most important states, refusing to submit to dictation from Richmond. Disintegrating forces of the sort to prove more hurtful than the onslaughts of the enemy were at work.

Whenever he could, Alexander Stephens sought refuge in the Waverly novels. Reading and his dogs served to take his mind from the perils that surrounded the country. Poor old Rio was on his last legs! It was pitiable to see him sniffing about the house, depending in his blindness entirely on that keen olfactory nerve of his. When the master was at home, he kept the poor dog always in sight; and, whenever he left Liberty Hall, he charged Anthony, the serving boy, not to let Rio stumble off the porch or butt his head against some closed door. Anticipating that Rio's end was at hand, Linton sent a substitute in the form of a naughty bull terrier. "I have concluded upon reflection that the dog's name shall be Sir Bingo Binks in full," Aleck wrote solemnly. "I will not do the illustrious hero the indignity of quartering him while I embalm his memory by giving his name to my bull terrier. He shall have the whole name, title and all."

Besides Scott's heroes and their namesakes, Stephens's adopted family offered diversion for the harassed Vice-President. The widow and children whom John L. Stephens had willed to his brother were constantly on his

mind. There is evidence enough that the bachelor enjoyed the responsibility. He bossed and advised his sister-in-law and was generous to a fault. He quarreled with the children, played with them and spoiled them. When the boy, Linton Andrew, left in January, 1863, to join Jo Thompson's Artillery, the uncle was anxious and sad. Linton was in love, it was said, with pretty Lucinda Frances Hammack. When some one asked him why he wanted to fight, he had replied, "To protect the fair sex." Uncle Aleck was pleased with his manner, for the lad was calm—not at all elated or depressed. Twenty minutes before the cars were to arrive on that January morning that he left Crawfordville, he rigged himself in something that was intended to represent a uniform and threw about his shoulders a fantastic shawl that looked very much like a Mexican blanket. The family that had gathered at Liberty Hall for the leave-taking looked on admiringly. After the good-by in the green and gold parlor, Alexander Stephens walked with the lad as far as the front steps. The shawl, trailing across the porch, was too great a temptation for the restless Sir Bingo Binks, who caught its edge between his sharp little teeth. "Let go my dress," Linton laughed, as he wrapped the mantle closer about him and reached for his uncle's hand. That evening Alexander Stephens went down to the Old Homestead to see Linton's mother. He knew that she was sad—"all her boys who have been with her so long having left her almost at once," he explained.

It was only with dogs and books that Alexander Stephens could lose himself. As he rode through the quiet streets of the village, people were continually stopping him with requests that concerned the men at the front. Was there news from the northern prisons? Was there any way to get the latest lists of the killed and wounded? From all sides there were calls for help. With Confederate money depreciating rapidly, a soldier's pay would not buy his wife

a pair of shoes. Food was scarce and growing scarcer. On the second of March Toombs wrote that he was resigning from the army. Then a few days later news came that he was ill at his home in Washington, Georgia. Alexander Stephens went at once to visit him, leaving Rio so feeble that he was quite sure the faithful friend would not live till his return. Just as the train was pulling out of the station, Anthony arrived with the news that Rio had dropped dead, while staggering toward his master's room. "I shed tears at his grave yesterday," Stephens wrote Richard Johnston. The lonely man had lost a friend whom he could trust. "His devotion to me was, I believe, stronger than life. . . . I miss him in the yard, in the house, in my walks. . . . He is gone. You, nor I, nor any one will ever see his like again." Frisky, fickle, superficial Sir Bingo Binks proved a very poor substitute for Rio.

Alexander Stephens knew, moreover, that the great days of the Confederacy had ended. He had known all along that they could not last, that with blockaded ports, unsound finances and dissensions within its boundaries, the Confederacy could not be made permanent by military victories, no matter how brilliant. The expenses of the government were steadily rising. In July, 1861, the debt was ten million dollars; in November of the same year, fifty-nine million; in February, 1862, one hundred and thirty-nine million; in August, three hundred and thirteen million; and by the end of 1862, five hundred and sixty-seven million. It had become hard to find lenders to advance capital in exchange for interest-bearing bonds. To overcome the difficulty resort was made to treasury notes. In January, 1863, the Confederate Congress, by a secret act, had legalized the French loan of fifteen million dollars secured by cotton. How to get the product out of the country constituted another problem. The amount of the loan was almost the only source of specie revenue. To check the terrific depre-

ciation of the currency, Secretary Memminger was making various recommendations, all of which Stephens thought unsound. Memminger's proposal to compel Confederate note-holders to exchange notes for bonds he considered an infringement of the contract between the lender and the government. When Memminger further proposed that the states guarantee the bonds, Stephens was outspoken in his disapproval of the Secretary's suggestions and policies. The opposition to the Funding Act of March 3, 1863, which was rather general throughout the Confederacy, was acute in North Carolina and Georgia. While H. S. Foote, then of Tennessee, was opposing the proposals Memminger and Davis sent to Congress, Governor Brown, conferring frequently with Alexander Stephens, was writing violent letters to Richmond based upon the decision of the Georgia Supreme Court, which had held that the Confederate authorities were bound to pay the debt and that the Funding Act was unconstitutional. Brown, moreover, opposed the states' taking over the Confederate debt as calculated to confuse national and state finances.

Newspapers all over the Confederacy began to "deplore the flagrant breach of public faith." They were holding that compulsory funding was virtually a repudiation of the obligations; while Memminger and Davis argued that it presented the only method of correcting the redundant currency. Alexander Stephens opposed every utterance that either Davis or Memminger made concerning the financial policy. "The whole scheme is radically wrong in purpose," he said. "The responsibility of creating debt and paying it ought to rest on the same shoulders. . . . If Congress has let its debt run appropriating without the nerve to tax, what will they do when they are relieved of that responsibility? . . . The debt now is not much short of one thousand million. Georgia's part of this would be, in round numbers, about one hundred million. They unwisely think

that they or their successors will never be called on to redeem it. In this they are sadly mistaken. I feel deeply upon the subject. It is utterly wrong, and the worst consequences will follow the policy if adopted."

By this time it was generally known that the President and the Vice-President were diametrically opposed on practically every question of public policy. The newspapers were lining up with the two factions that had sprung into being. Stephens, however, disclaimed knowledge of factional leadership. He was not fighting the President, he insisted. Nor was he attempting to organize opposition. It was merely his duty, as well as his right, to express himself and to endeavor to get Congress to act in accordance with what he honestly believed to be right. It had seemed wiser, he said, for him to remain in Georgia. In the late spring, however, he went again to Richmond, for suddenly a new plan by which peace might be brought about had occurred to him. Two and a half years of war had moderated the temper of the South. There was less talk throughout the states of the necessity for a separate confederacy. The people would be content to return to the Union if their rights could be safeguarded. For months public meetings had been held in New York City, at which the United States had been denounced. It had been a good sign when Washington had interdicted the exchange of newspapers. Nevertheless, papers had filtered in, which told of peace movements in various sections of the North. Depressed articles had been appearing from Horace Greeley's pen, urging more fury, attacking the *New York World* for peace articles that had appeared, and excoriating those who clamored for peace. Mrs. Shewmake in her diary reflected the hope that was spreading throughout the South when she wrote, "There are reports that Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, and perhaps Ohio will league together to stop this war. . . . If this be true, the day of our triumph is right

at hand." Many northerners had opposed Lincoln's reversal of policy involved in the proclamation emancipating the slaves. There were many northern advocates of state rights and individual liberty who found conscription, martial law and the suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus* exceedingly distressing. Honorable Benjamin R. Curtis, for instance, who as former justice of the United States Supreme Court had dissented in the Dred Scott decision, had issued a warning against the dangerous encroachments of which the President was guilty. *The Old Guard*, published by C. Chauncey Burr of the Jefferson School of Politics, was now permitted to appear, denouncing the war party. The Democrats of Ohio had nominated Vallandigham, who had opposed the President's policies in Congress, and seemed to have a very good chance of electing him governor. In New York had been tolerated public meetings at which peace resolutions had been passed, and opponents of Lincoln's policies had carried the state elections. A peace convention had been called to meet in Philadelphia.

The armies of the South occupied strategic positions. Hooker, moreover, had been repulsed in his march toward Richmond; it looked as though Grant would be repulsed at Vicksburg; and the North stood in fear of an offensive from Lee.

Therefore it seemed to Stephens that circumstances were auspicious for the making of peace proposals. A conference could be sought upon the pretext of discussing the exchange of prisoners, concerning which many difficulties had arisen. If peace were not brought about, at least some of the suffering in the prisons of both North and South might be ameliorated.

The cartel, which had been agreed upon early in the war, had been broken the year before by the Federals. Since then, there had been no exchange of prisoners. The South, with food supplies exceedingly scarce, was put to it to care

for the prisoners on their hands and would gladly have returned the men to the North. Yet stories came constantly of mistreatment of their own men in northern prisons. Therefore, it seemed that the only chance of getting tolerable conditions for their captured soldiers consisted in holding prisoners and threatening retaliation. While in Richmond, however, Stephens chanced to see a letter that had been written to Davis on the twenty-third of April by General D. Hunter. The contents was alarming in the extreme and distressing to a man who all his life had suffered and who shrank from contemplating the suffering of others. "In the month of August last," Hunter had written, "you declared all those engaged in arming the negroes for the country to be felons and directed the immediate execution of all such as were captured. . . . I now give you notice that unless this order is immediately revoked, I will at once cause an execution of every Rebel officer and every Rebel slave-holder in my possession."

As soon as Stephens saw the letter, he wrote to Davis, suggesting that a conference might bring about relief for the prisoners and offering his services. He referred to his refusal to accept just after the organization of the government the President's commission to enter into negotiations with Washington. At that time he had believed that conferences would prove unavailing. Now he had hope that some good might be accomplished. The recognition of the sovereignty of the states, however, he held to be the only basis upon which a settlement could be made. "That the Federal government is yet ripe for such acknowledgment," he added, "I by no means believe, but that the time has come for a proper presentation of the question to the authorities at Washington I do believe." The mission that concerned a minor point might be the means of opening the larger.

The letter was written from Georgia on June twelfth.

On the nineteenth the President replied by telegram, requesting Alexander Stephens to return to Richmond. When Stephens reached the capital of the Confederacy, conditions had changed materially: Lee had crossed the Potomac, and Vicksburg was in danger. Frankly he told the President that circumstances had altered the views he had expressed in his letter. He feared that the presence of Lee in the North would excite the war party and that Lincoln would refuse to see him. Davis, arguing, however, that the presence of Lee's army in northern territory increased the probability of the conference's being accomplished, called a Cabinet meeting, which he requested the Vice-President to attend. The Secretaries agreeing with the President, Stephens consented to undertake the mission.

According to the slow motion of events that characterized executive action, it was not till the third of July that Alexander Stephens and Robert Ould, Confederate agent for the exchange of prisoners, started down the James River on a small steamer that had been made ready for them. Before the commissioners reached Newport News by the slow river route, the battle of Gettysburg had been fought and Lee was retreating toward Virginia. While they were detained by a blockade squadron, Vicksburg surrendered. Then came from Washington Lincoln's refusal to see the Rebel commissioners. As Alexander Stephens had warned President Davis, he had expected nothing else. He felt that Lee should have been kept on the Rappahannock, that some of his men should have been sent to reenforce Vicksburg, and that General Morgan should have been kept out of Ohio, where he surely aroused the war spirit. On July ninth he wrote Linton that he was sorry that Lee had crossed the Potomac. "If I had known that he was going to do it, I should not have written the President. . . . My policy and the policy of invasion were directly opposite."

A few days later Alexander Stephens returned to Georgia.

He was through with the business that had taken him to Richmond. It appeared that the North and South would begin retaliation. Perhaps he could work upon some other plan for ending the savagery of war. Certainly he could accomplish nothing by remaining in the faction-torn capital. He might, of course, have entered into the gaiety that had power to drown problems of state. There were many bright coteries that would have welcomed him. The Mosaic Club, for instance, was meeting informally from parlor to parlor and serving refreshments far better than muffins and waffles and coffee for men and women who gathered for the purpose of forgetting worry. No end of interesting games had been invented, of which the "forfeit essay" was perhaps the most popular. From one hat you drew a question, from another a word that was to be used in the answer. Alexander Stephens could have matched wits with the best of the members—with quaint George Bagby, Virginia's poet-humorist; with gallant Willie Myers; with Harry Stanton, Kentucky's soldier-poet; or with "Ran" Tucker, who could tell an inimitable story and sing an excellent ballad; or with Innes Randolph, who when he drew from one hat the question, "What kind of shoe was made on the Last of the Mohicans?" and from the other the words *Daddy Longlegs* was guilty of the extemporaneous rhyme:

"Old Daddy Longlegs was a sinner hoary
And punished for his wickedness according to the story.
Between him and the Indian shoe this likeness does
come in—
One made a mock o' virtue, and one a moccasin!"

But Alexander Stephens was taking the war very seriously.

CHAPTER XVIII

LITTLE ALECK FIGHTS FOR PEACE

THOUGH the theater of war had not yet been expanded to include Georgia, the people were suffering from the depreciated currency and the shortage of crops, and were constantly hearing tragic news that concerned the boys at the front. Having utterly despaired of the war's ending in victory for the South and earnestly desiring to end the suffering, Alexander Stephens was watching hopefully the political developments in the North. There was chance that the peace party and the opponents of Lincoln might defeat the President's reelection and turn the tide in favor of a settlement that the South would be able to accept. Though he could be of no service in Richmond, he had not despaired of preparing the public mind to entertain whatever peace proposals might be offered.

Stephens hoped that the opposition to Lincoln was growing. There were many people in the North who had held the President responsible for the Federal defeats in the summer of 1862 and for Lee's great victories at Fredericksburg in December of 1862 and at Chancellorsville in May of 1863. Stephens did not believe that Lee's retreat after Gettysburg or that the fall of Vicksburg had greatly strengthened Lincoln's position. Constantly watching the northern papers for encouraging news, he knew that when Chase was approached regarding the presidency, he was reported to have said, "If I were controlled by mere personal sentiments, I should prefer the reelection of Mr. Lincoln to that of any other man. But I doubt the expediency of re-electing anybody, and I think a man of dif-

ferent qualities will be needed for the next four years. I am not anxious to be regarded as that man; and I am quite willing to leave that question to the decision of those who agree in thinking that some such man should be chosen."

If the South could be persuaded to hold fast to those principles that constituted in Stephens's mind the reasons for the establishment of a separate government and if the opponents of centralism in the North could be encouraged to stand against the Lincoln policies, there was a chance that the Federal administration might be overthrown. At the moment, however, Stephens could do no more than preach his doctrine in the South and await its propagation and spread. Therefore he accepted all invitations that were extended to him to address the people.

In Sparta on August first he attempted to give encouragement at the same time that he expounded the purpose underlying the organization of the Confederate States. Yes, the country was in great peril, he told his audience, but the situation was far from hopeless. If the South were determined to be free, subjugation was impossible. Not for a moment could the people lose sight of the main issue—which was the principle of state rights and personal liberty. The country must in its government exemplify the doctrine that had actuated secession.

He was beginning to see, moreover, that the President was not altogether to blame for the errors that were being made. His subordinates, the devotees, of West Point, were chiefly responsible. Davis was ill most of the time. Again there was much discussion as to what would happen in the event of his death. As much as he disapproved the policies that had been inaugurated, Stephens shrank from the thought of being placed at the helm of the government. He knew that many of the leaders did not trust the judgment of the Vice-President. Nor was he sure of his ability to administer the government. "I know that affairs in

many particulars would not be managed as they are; but would they be managed for the better or the worse? I know not," he wrote Johnston.

At Liberty Hall there was never a chance to escape the pressure of public affairs: visitors flocked to see him; he was deluged by letters. So, as often as he could, he fled to Linton's home in Sparta, certain of finding there three little girls who knew nothing about Confederate politics. November twenty-third was Becky's birthday. Uncle Aleck remembered the day and planned a surprise visit. The house was utterly deserted when he arrived except for Linton's dog, Pompey, who extended a cordial welcome. Pompey, as the grandfather of Sir Bingo Binks, was a person of some dignity, who knew how to meet difficult situations.

Finally the servants and the little girls arrived. Becky got her presents, and she and Claude quickly supplanted the important Pompey. Every one had news that Uncle Aleck or Marse Aleck must hear. Many of the young pigs seemed to have bad colds. There were eighty acres of corn to gather. If fire-wood wasn't soon hauled, the house would be cold, and no food could be cooked. Becky, who had learned to write very well, wanted a bit of assistance in getting off a letter to her father, who was away. Then little Claude, not to be outdone by an older sister, must write one too. The effort cost her a great deal of labor. Uncle Aleck doctored up some of the letters and assured her that Father could read what she had written. Cosby Connel, a bachelor who lived with the Stephensens of Sparta, pleased her by remarking between rheumatic grunts that her writing was quite as plain as her Uncle Aleck's.

Then there was a great deal of very delightful chattering. Because Uncle Aleck seemed interested in hearing everything that had happened recently, Becky and Claude were most accommodating about telling him all the news.

When evening came, Doctor Berckmans dropped in for

a game of piquet, over which he and Alexander Stephens and Cosby Connel quarreled in friendly fashion. Finally Alexander Stephens sat in the corner and smoked his pipe while the other men quarreled on. Half asleep, he would hear Cosby saying, "Five cards and four sequences is nine and three is twelve—is twelve—is twelve—is twelve," while, "You will play for thirteen," scolded the Doctor. The game was still going on when Mr. Stephens and Pompey went to bed. Unlike his grandson, however, Pompey made no attempt to climb upon the visitor's bed. Sir Bingo Binks was notorious for finding soft places and warm ones in cold weather.

Without such interludes as the visit to Sparta provided, the Vice-President could scarcely have stood the ordeal of the winter. Therefore he went frequently to see Linton and the children and managed to cultivate a philosophy that rescued him from despair. "Man's happiness depends more upon himself than upon everything else combined," he said. "Never let the mind turn upon anything disagreeable—turn it to something else. With proper discipline of oneself in this way, ever keeping the passions in perfect subjection, contentment and happiness are obtainable by all, with a constant culture of the moral faculties, and a firm reliance upon the great Father of the universe."

He knew that the placidity he was cultivating with so great effort was all that sustained him. Not a day passed that some one did not place before him a knotty problem. Throughout Georgia it was clear early in the summer that a movement was on foot to organize a reconstruction party for the purpose of ending the war. Stephens, of course, was in favor of reconstruction on the basis of state sovereignty and liberty for the individual—as he had insisted from the beginning. Yet as Vice-President of the Confederacy, he was without power to act. Brown, he knew, looked hopefully toward the movement. The time

would never come, however, for Georgia to act independently of her sister states. Therefore, he did not take kindly to Brown's suggestion to address the people upon the subject of reconstruction. Yet whenever there was a chance that his intervention might relieve suffering, he importuned Richmond. In November he wrote lengthily to the Secretary of War concerning the routine policies of granting furloughs and extensions, suggesting that in each district some one be given authority in the matter. Wounded men were dying by the thousands because, without regard to their condition, they were being hurried back to the war before recovery had been accomplished. The harrowing stories that came to him, sometimes seemed more than Stephens could bear. The boy who so many eons before had lain awake all night because of the death of a lamb and a ewe had in many respects changed little since he had become a man.

Through the fall and winter Brown's fight with the Confederate authorities became more and more bitter, abetted as it was by Stephens's counsel to hold firmly to the principles of non-interference from the central government. Reelection in 1863 for a fourth term, despite the opposition of the administration, had emboldened Brown in his stand against Confederate decrees. "I am for the cause and not for the dynasties," he was enunciating clearly while he prepared the message to be presented to the legislature at its March convening. Upon the act again suspending the writ of *habeas corpus*, which Congress had passed before adjourning on the seventeenth of February, he was centering his attention. Anxious to have his message particularly effective, Brown wrote requesting Alexander Stephens to meet him at Linton's that the three might confer together. Just before the legislature met there was a deal of corresponding between the Governor and the Vice-President. Yes, said Brown, it would be well to get the cooperation of

Ben Hill, who throughout the war had been a supporter of the administration. Would Stephens use his influence? Stephens would, of course. The relationship between Hill and him since the Montgomery conference had been agreeable, if not cordial.

Brown's message left no doubt in the people's minds, if there ever had been any, as to how the Governor felt toward the Confederate administration. Ben Hill, moreover, detected the fine hand of Stephens. With those two-edged words of his, he congratulated his old enemy upon the message. The statement as to the "causes of the war, how conducted, and who responsible," he pronounced excellent. "I know I must thank you for it," he said ironically. "The whole country will owe you an everlasting debt of gratitude. Governor Brown can never repay you for the great benefit you have bestowed upon him. You have given grandeur of conception, an enlargement of views, and a perspicuity of style to which he never could have reached. His only trouble can be—the footprints are *too plain* not to be recognized." In the light of Hill's agreement however with the main issue involved in the letter, to which he was replying, the irony in the paragraph just quoted was overlooked. Hill admitted that the time had come for the government to negotiate for reconstruction on the basis of the maintenance of state sovereignty. It was also well, he thought, to make known to the world that negotiations would now be agreeable to the South.

On March sixteenth when the legislature had scarcely had the chance to digest Brown's message, Stephens addressed the body. First he tried to boost the people's morale, which, in the face of recent defeats, was very low. Then he sharply criticized the conscription and *habeas corpus* acts and warned the people against supposing that any danger was sufficient to cause them to surrender their liberties. Though the funding and tax acts were utterly

wrong, he said, the states must now pass legislation to save themselves as much loss as possible. He expressed disapproval of raising the military age to include men as old as fifty. Conscription was wrong in principle. This particular act, moreover, was dangerous in that it would strip the farms of the few laborers that remained. The suspension of the writ, conferring upon the President and the Secretary of War and the General in command in the trans-Mississippi section power to arrest and imprison any person who might be charged with certain acts—not all of which were even crimes under the law—was an outrage, chiefly because arrests were allowed without oath or affirmation. The people should protest against the congressional usurpation.

Herschel Johnson wrote soon after the address had appeared in print that Stephens's antipathy to the President was perceptible. "I think you had as well unbottled your wrath," he said, "for after all you are as well understood in the estimation of the country to be hostile as if you had avowed it. . . . You are to be classed with those whose palpable object is to organize a party in opposition to the administration." Indeed, Johnson went so far as to declare that antipathy to Davis had misled Stephens's judgment.

Alexander Stephens answered quickly with his denial that he harbored enmity against the President. "While I do not and never have regarded him as a great man or a statesman on a large scale or a man of any marked genius, yet I have regarded him as a man of good intentions, weak and vacillating, petulant, peevish, obstinate, but not firm. Am now beginning to doubt his good intentions." Then Stephens suggested that perhaps Davis's shortcomings were to be attributed, not to weakness, but to bad purposes. At any rate, his whole policy would indicate that he was desirous of absolute power. "You have heard me in conversation," he continued, "speak of his weakness and imbecility. . . . I

had no more feeling of resentment toward him for these than I had toward the defects and infirmities of my poor old blind and deaf dog that you saw when you were here. Poor old Rio! He is dead now and gone to his last rest. . . . This cry of sustaining the administration you will allow me to say, with all due respect to you, is nothing but a stupid, senseless cachination." Stephens ended the letter with an emphatic denial that he was party to any movement in Georgia against Davis; as an individual he was merely voicing his convictions as he had been accustomed to voice them all his days.

Linton Stephens was presenting to the Georgia legislature resolutions he had prepared in collaboration with his brother. The first condemned the suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus* as unconstitutional and declared that constitutional liberty, the sole cause of the war, must be sustained in the South in contrast to the usurpations of which the North was guilty. The peace resolution suggested that the Confederate States in the flush of recent victories make the United States government an offer of peace, based upon the principles asserted by our forefathers of 1776, but pledged Georgia to a prosecution of the war until peace could be obtained upon just and honorable terms. Both resolutions were passed by the legislature.

There can be no doubt that the Vice-President's speech and Linton's resolutions were far-reaching in their consequences. On April fifth Governor Brown wrote Stephens that the Messrs. Wartzfelder had agreed to pay for printing and distributing among the army a thousand copies of Stephens's speech and that copies of Linton's resolutions had already been sent the captains of all companies in the Georgia regiments.

Alexander Stephens's object was clear-cut and sincere. He wanted to show the peace party at the North that people in the South were sympathizing with their efforts to bring

the war to a close. He wanted to plant in their minds the principles that had actuated the South in seceding, and he wanted to assure victory—not merely for a separate government, but for a government based upon the constitutional liberty to which his allegiance was pledged. The rank and file, however, in the United States and in the Confederate States were in no frame of mind to follow the abstract reasoning of a man like Alexander Stephens. In the North the war party used the action of the Georgia legislature to prove that disintegrating forces were at work among the rebels. In the South Stephens's utterances so weakened the power of the administration as to make successful prosecution of the war impossible.

Almost at once Alabama, North Carolina and Mississippi followed with condemnation of the suspension of the writ. When Stephens saw that Mississippi had been unanimous in its vote, "What will Mrs. Grundy say now?" he chuckled. "Is Mr. Davis's own state in unanimous opposition to the administration in this particular? Are they all factionists and malcontents?" In the executive mansion in Richmond the sick and harassed President of the Confederacy must have realized that the work of Alexander Stephens, as he remained in retirement, was far-reaching and destined to be devastating in its results. Nevertheless, the little Vice-President was following the dictates of his mind and conscience. He believed in constitutional liberty. War or no war, he must be true to his convictions.

Toward the end of March there came a letter from one David F. Cable, who was held at the Andersonville prison, making a suggestion that fell in line with Stephens's plans. Cable claimed that he was from Ohio and that he had accompanied the northern forces into the South as a non-combatant, hoping to be able to talk over with southerners the peace movement in which he was interested. He felt that, if the abolition party could be defeated in the coming

elections, there was an excellent chance for negotiations. Having been captured, however, he was then interned at Andersonville. Now he asked parole in order that he might discuss his mission with Stephens and others.

At the time the chance of defeating Lincoln seemed good. If Lee could keep Grant from achieving victories in Virginia, there would be less and less confidence in Lincoln's administration. Stephens sent the prisoner's letter to Davis, suggesting that Cable be paroled and expressing his belief that, if hostilities were once suspended and negotiations started, both sides would come to the conclusion that the British authorities and the colonists had reached—in other words, that reciprocal advantage and mutual convenience are the only foundations of peace and friendship between states.

Stephens's letter was mailed on April thirteenth. On the nineteenth Davis replied that he would have Cable's case investigated. If the man had spoken truthfully, he might visit Stephens and then return to Ohio. The President, however, seemed not to have read the portion of the Vice-President's letter that had to do with peace negotiations. At least, he made no comment upon it.

When days passed without news from Andersonville, Stephens sent an inquiry to the commanding officer, who replied that Cable would not be able to visit Mr. Stephens. The latter part of June another letter came from Cable, complaining of the hardships endured at the prison and saying he believed he would not live to return to Ohio unless something were done speedily. Again Stephens wrote to Davis. To this letter there was no reply. On the twenty-third of July the commanding officer at Andersonville sent the news that Cable was dead.

Alexander Stephens reached the conclusion that the President did not approve a conference with Cable, that he was not interested in the defeat of Lincoln or in peace negotia-

tions of any kind. This attitude, in the face of the suffering that the war was causing in both the North and the South, was distressing in the extreme. The fate of Cable was concrete evidence of the tragedies daily enacted at Andersonville. Stephens felt that the North was to blame for the inoperation of the cartel. Certainly Ould, the Confederate agent for exchange, had made effort after effort to exchange man for man and to parole the surplus numbers. It was daily becoming more and more clear that the North was using the sufferings and death of their men in southern prisons as a means of fostering the war spirit and thus hastening victory. Stephens believed also that the authorities at Andersonville were doing all in their power to make conditions bearable. Thirty thousand men, however, were crowded together. They were receiving exactly the food that was rationed to Confederate soldiers. With supplies scarce throughout the South, it was hard enough to make the amount sufficient to sustain life. The southern boys could live on corn bread and "fat-back," for many of them had never been used to any other diet. Corn bread, however, was not food for northerners. Therefore, the men were dying of disentery and scurvy and not from poor sanitation and starvation. Over and over Stephens argued with the authorities that in the name of humanity the prisoners confined at Andersonville should be sent home with or without exchange. First, some one should explain to them the motives for so doing. If they understood that their government had left them to die and that a magnanimous South was unwilling for the savagery to continue, they might return with the gospel of peace upon their tongues. Davis and his Cabinet thought otherwise, however, arguing that the only chance to see that the Confederate prisoners in the North were well treated was to hold northern soldiers that had been captured. Alexander Stephens was seeing that Jefferson Davis stood for nothing short of subjugation

tion or sweeping victory for the South. If he could not work with the President, he would work without him.

Nevertheless, in May, 1864, the Vice-President attempted to return to Richmond. At Charlotte, North Carolina, the delays began. All the way from Georgia the trains had been traveling irregularly, making slow speed up the grades and dashing furiously down. At the top of a hill the coach that carried the Vice-President broke loose from the rest of the train and sped backward by its own momentum until the necessity to climb gave it pause. An approaching engine applied brakes just in time to prevent the coach from being utterly demolished. Four days later Stephens had got as far as Reidsville, North Carolina. Near Danville a collision killed several soldiers and destroyed a bridge. Because it then appeared impossible to reach Richmond, Alexander Stephens started again toward Georgia. The twenty-third of May found him at Columbia, South Carolina. The days had been full of interesting adventure. At every stop wounded Confederates and Federal prisoners were taken aboard. Stephens managed to talk with most of the passengers, fed the hungry, distributed money among the destitute, tried to cheer the poor fellows who were chafing under the delays that kept them from reaching their homes. The wounded soldiers who were prevented from entering the crowded train by the doors climbed in through the windows. One of them resented preference being given the Vice-President. "I'll be damned if I don't go," the poor fellow cried, "I'm as good as the Vice-President." Stephens smiled and did not doubt that the soldier was speaking the truth.

At last the weary little Vice-President was nodding in his seat when the voices of some ladies awakened him. "The Vice-President is aboard," a young man whispered. "Which is he?" came the reply. "That man there—that little man?" A guttural sound that signified disappointment caused

Alexander Stephens to open his eyes. The lady was laughing. The little man felt very sad—not because of his bad looks, he said later, but because he had disappointed one of his constituents. Altogether it was a relief to know that he would after a while reach Liberty Hall.

The hardships of the trip left him feeble for weeks. "My disease is constantly shifting," he wrote Richard Johnston a few weeks later, attempting to speak lightly of his ailments. "Poor Tithonus! While I never believed that story about him, Aurora, and the grasshopper, yet part of the fable is certainly applicable to me—premature old age and infirmity. I am in very much the same condition, constitutionally, with my country. In my opinion, it is just as I am, on the decline."

Sherman had reached Georgia the spring before. On July seventeenth he crossed the Chattahoochee River and began his movement toward Atlanta, which was for a time checked by the Confederates. In the North, however, the peace party was growing. Every one seemed to be sick and tired of war but Abraham Lincoln, whose second term began to appear doubtful. On the twenty-third of August Lincoln had written the memorandum: "This morning, as for some days past, it seems exceedingly probable that this administration will not be elected." So it appeared to Alexander Stephens also, who was reading hopefully all that Lincoln's critics had to say. On the twenty-ninth of August the Democrats met in Chicago, nominated McClellan and passed a resolution drawn up by Vallandigham, favoring peace. On September third, while Republicans were preparing their minds to accept defeat, came the news that Sherman had taken Atlanta. The war spirit at the North gathered momentum, and despondency gripped the Confederate States.

While Sherman's raiders were galloping through Georgia, Stephens crossed the Savannah River into South

Carolina and, circulating among the people, talked freely of public affairs. Because the strength and resources of the South were exhausted, he said, peace should be made at once. The South, returning to the Union and assisted by the peace party at the North, could elect the president of the United States and then make her own terms. Stephens's words, reported to Richmond by Burt, of South Carolina, proved exceedingly disturbing to the Confederate authorities at the capital.

On September 15, 1864, Sherman wrote to Major-General Halleck: "Governor Brown has disbanded his militia to gather the corn and sorghum of the state. I have reason to believe that he and Stephens want to visit me, and I have sent them a hearty invitation."

The General's "reason to believe" that he could make headway with Stephens consisted in his knowledge of the Vice-President's opposition to the administration's program and not of the man himself. He knew, of course, that Stephens wanted peace. So on September seventeenth Sherman wrote his little scheme to Lincoln.

"A Mr. Wright, former member of Congress from Rome, Ga., and a Mr. King of Marietta are now going between Governor Brown and myself. I have said that some of the people of Georgia are now engaged in rebellion begun in error and perpetuated in pride but that Georgia can now save herself from the devastations of war preparing for her only by withdrawing her quota out of the Confederate Army and aiding me to repel Hood from the borders of the state, in which event, instead of desolating the land as we progress, I will keep our men to the high road and common and pay for the corn and meat we need and take. I am fully conscious of the delicate nature of such assertions, but it would be a magnificent stroke of policy if I could, without surrendering a foot of ground or of principle, arouse the latent enmity to Jeff. Davis of Georgia. The people do not hesitate to say that Mr.

Stephens was and is a Union man at heart, and they feel that Jeff. Davis will not trust him or let him have a share in his government."

Before King reached Crawfordville Toombs, hearing of Sherman's plan, forthwith dispatched a letter to Stephens, advising him not to see Sherman. "He will endeavor merely to detach Georgia from the Confederacy," he said with prophetic discernment.

Stephens, however, was already writing William King that he had no power to enter into negotiations.

"In communicating this to General Sherman, you may also say to him that if he is of the opinion that there is any prospect of our agreeing upon terms of adjustment to be submitted to the action of our respective governments, even though he has no power to act in advance of the premises, and will make this known to me in some formal and authoritative manner (being so desirous for peace himself, as you represent him to have expressed himself) I would most cheerfully and willingly, with the consent of our authorities, accede to his request thus manifested, and enter with all the earnestness of my nature upon the responsible and arduous task of restoring peace and harmony to the country, upon principles of honor, right, and justice to all parties. This does not seem to me to be at all impossible, if truth and reason should be permitted to have their full sway."

It is entirely likely that Stephens influenced Brown's curt reply to the Sherman overtures.

"Say to General Sherman," wrote the Governor, "that Georgia has entered into a confederation with her Southern sisters for the maintenance of the same sovereignty of each, severally, which she claims for herself, and her public faith thus pledged will never be violated by me. Come weal or come woe, the state of Georgia shall never by my consent withdraw from the Confederacy in dishonor. She will

never make separate terms with the enemy which may free her territory from invasion and leave her confederates in the lurch."

Davis must have been alarmed by the reports that Sherman was making overtures in Georgia, for he left Richmond at once, ostensibly to confer with his generals in the South. "You say Jeff Davis is on a visit to Hood," Lincoln wrote Sherman on September twenty-seventh. "I judge that Brown and Stephens are the objects of his visit." Davis, however, should have known better than to distrust Alexander H. Stephens in such a crisis. It was one thing to oppose the President's policies; it was quite another to desert a country.

Nevertheless, Alexander Stephens was now working with singleness of purpose to end the war. Years before he had said in Congress, "Fields of blood and carnage may make men brave and heroic, but seldom tend to make nations good, virtuous or great." He could have gone much further. This war was bringing out the worst in the men about him. It was engendering malice, hatred, lying and vice of every other sort. Papers of both North and South were representing their former countrymen as monsters.

Stephens, still hoping for the defeat of Lincoln, and the success of the peace party led by McClellan, felt that the friends of peace in the South should take some indirect part in the campaign. When the Chicago convention proposed a meeting of all the states and planted itself upon a state-rights platform, Stephens thought that the time had come for the South to show that its mood was at least receptive. He was, therefore, distressed to find that Davis, on the speech-making tour that followed his trip to Georgia, expressed himself before an audience in Columbia, South Carolina, as opposed to a convention of the states. He had further weakened the position of the peace party at the

North by saying that there could be no peace except by the sword and that "the only way to make spaniels civil was to whip them." Such taunts could not fail to arouse bitterness at the North and strengthen Lincoln's cause.

Lincoln's reelection and the perpetuation of the war party did not cause Stephens to cease his efforts in behalf of peace. Sherman was marching on to the sea, laying waste a path more than fifty miles wide. Young men were being uselessly sacrificed on the battle-fields and were dying in the prisons of North and South. Women were broken-hearted. Little children were starving. President Davis was declaring foolishly that victory was in sight and that Sherman "would meet the fate that befell Napoleon in the retreat from Moscow." The little Vice-President, consistent unto the end, continued to fight for peace upon the basis of constitutional liberty.

Linton's children through it all were providing the diversion the harassed little bachelor needed. They were always amusing—these youngsters who invariably expressed themselves freely without a great deal of reverence for their distinguished elders. Linton's letters were full of their comments.

"Papa," little Becky had said just after the affair with Sherman, "if Uncle Ellick was a school teacher, his children wouldn't learn anything."

"Why not?" asked her father.

"Because he'd tell 'em everything."

Alexander Stephens entered no denial of her charge. He must have known that the little girl was right. He did like to tell people what to do, and he was always rather irritated when his advice was not taken and when there was argument concerning facts upon which he knew himself to be an authority.

CHAPTER XIX

OLD FRIENDS CONFER AT HAMPTON ROADS

DECEMBER 5, 1864! The Vice-President of the Confederate States was again presiding over the Senate. Eighteen months had passed since the people of Richmond had seen the queer little man who had been elected to the second position of executive importance. There had been news, of course, that he had been doing some sort of agitating in Georgia. Yet Richmond was not paying a great deal of attention to his absence or wondering much about him. What with the constant fear that some relative would be killed at the front and the eternal effort to be gay, despite all the harrowing news that kept coming from every direction, Richmond had had its mind and hands quite full. The official ladies from a distance had been put to it to vie with the Virginians in dispensing hospitality. Even with prices prohibitive, one had to serve delicious food in Virginia. Mrs. Chesnut was recording it all gaily enough in her diary. Everywhere there was evidence of good Virginia cooking—"terrapin stew, gumbo, fish, oysters in every shape, game and wine: as good as wine ever is—juleps, claret cup, apple toddy, whiskey punches and all that—such hams as these Virginia people cure; such home-made bread—there is no such bread in the world—just think of the dinners, suppers, breakfasts we have been to!"

But Richmond now, in the upper crust, was frightened again—as frightened as it had been when McClellan was threatening the city—and food was getting distressingly scarce. Of course, for a long time people had been looking shabby, for Virginians can do without clothes far more

happily than they can yield to the necessity of curtailing the amount of food served. Money was simply no good at all. Thirty dollars a day Alexander Stephens had to pay for his meals and room. "Fuel, lights, and extras generally will be about thirty dollars per day more," he wrote in despair. "So it will not take long to consume my salary."

Yet he was determined to stay in Richmond as long as he thought there was a chance for him to accomplish something. How could the President fail to know that the country was completely exhausted? The poor man was too ill and harassed to see clearly. Perhaps his optimism was all that kept him alive. To Stephens it became certain that Davis's blindness to the true state of affairs was all that fanned the war spirit into flame. The people who were the prey to the Federal armies seemed ready to accept peace on almost any terms. Toward the middle of December, when it was reported that the President was dead, Stephens did not know whether or not to believe the rumor. Certainly the attitude of the Cabinet was suddenly more deferential toward the Vice-President, who had been opposing every move the government had made. "It is amusing," wrote Jones in his diary, "to observe the change of manner of the secretaries and of the heads of the bureaus toward Vice-President Stephens when it is feared that the President is *in extremis*." Even Mr. Hunter, fat as he was, flew about quite briskly.

Congress was again wrangling over martial law and the suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus*. It mattered not what might be happening to the armies in the field, Stephens felt that when constitutional liberty was at stake he should make a fight in behalf of his convictions. The bill passed the House and came to a vote in the Senate. General Hardee had recently surrendered Savannah, and Sherman had sent his famous message to President Lincoln: "I beg to present you as a Christmas gift the city of Savannah with

one hundred and fifty guns and plenty of ammunition and twenty-five thousand bales of cotton."

Stephens's mind, for a moment turned away from the war, was centered upon the injustice and unconstitutionality of suspending the writ of *habeas corpus*, which was the Anglo-Saxon's birthright. In the Senate the vote of the bill was a tie—Burnett, Caperton, Dortch, Henry, Hunter, Hill, Johnson of Georgia, Maxwell, Orr, Walker, voting affirmatively; Baker, Barnwell, Brown, Garland, Graham, Johnson of Missouri, Semmes, Simms, Sparrow, Watson, voting negatively. The vote of Alexander H. Stephens was required to decide the question. The president of the Senate announced forthwith that he would like to cast his vote "if the Senate would indulge him in giving his reasons." When Mr. Henry objected, Stephens put the question: "Is it the sense of the Senate that the chair in exercising his constitutional right to vote on a question on which senators are equally divided has the right to give the reasons for the vote he shall give?" Dortch, of North Carolina, leaped to his feet and announced that he would change his vote from affirmative to negative. Whereupon Stephens ruled that the gentleman could not change his vote without the unanimous consent of the Senate. A heated debate followed the chair's ruling. When the vote was taken, Stephens was not sustained, and the Senate adjourned immediately.

Alexander Stephens called R. M. T. Hunter to him. He was ready to resign at once, he said. Mr. Hunter expressed belief that the Senate had not intended its action to be construed in the nature of an affront. The members had merely felt that at such a time as this, a speech by the Vice-President in opposition to the policies of the administration would be disastrous. Yet Stephens was not convinced. He was remaining in Richmond for but two purposes: to influence Congress in behalf of constitutional liberty and in the hope that he might be instrumental in ending the war.

Feeling that he was failing in both purposes, he thought that it would be as well for him to return to Georgia.

The next day, however, Mr. Hunter brought the Vice-President a resolution passed unanimously by the Senate, requesting that Stephens address the body in secret session upon the condition of public affairs. The Vice-President accepted the invitation. Here was a chance to impress upon the lawmakers the principles that he had been trying to teach all the days of his public life. He entered the Senate chamber and without resuming the chair, delivered an exegesis of his governmental theory, of the principles actuating the war, and of the administration policies which he thought dangerous when accepted by a country that should be demonstrating to the world the practical application of the liberties in which it professed to believe.

Profoundly impressed, the Senate asked him to present his views in the form of resolutions. Alexander Stephens lost no time in complying. The resolutions declared the sovereignty of the individual states to be the only basis upon which peace could be restored and recognized the necessity that the several states act upon any proposed treaty. They "hailed with gratification" the peace sentiment in the North and suggested that three commissioners be passed through the lines for the purpose of inaugurating negotiations. The resolutions passed the Senate without a dissenting vote.

In strange coincidence, it happened that almost immediately there appeared in Richmond Francis P. Blair, Senior, whom Lincoln had permitted to pass through the lines. It was on January sixth that Stephens addressed the Senate. It was on the twelfth that Davis saw Blair for the first interview. Stephens's resolutions were fresh in the minds of the senators. Blair had come, it transpired, to propose a peace conference. Slavery was doomed, argued Blair. Then why not close that issue and deal with another? Both North and South, because of adherence to the Monroe

Doctrine, should look with alarm upon the designs that France had upon Mexico.

In 1861, on account of a money dispute, France, Spain and England had sent expeditions into Mexico. Great Britain and Spain, however, had soon withdrawn their forces. France, it seemed, was anxious to restore in America the prestige of the Latin race and place a European monarch in Mexico. Seward's diplomacy had later brought from France the assurance that she had no intention of disturbing Mexico's republican form of government. Slidell, moreover, the Confederate commissioner in France, had proposed to side with France in order to secure her assistance in the war against the United States. Louis Napoleon delaying, Slidell's diplomacy had finally proved unavailing. By the autumn of 1863 it had become known on this side of the water that the emperor of France had planned to establish an imperial government in Mexico and had offered the throne to Maximilian of Austria. The convention that had nominated Lincoln had passed resolutions against the supplanting in Mexico of the republican form of government.

It appears that Davis listened with an open mind to Blair's scheme, which involved a secret armistice that would enable President Davis to transfer part of his forces to the banks of the Rio Grande—to join northern soldiers in dispelling "the Bonaparte-Hapsburg dynasty from our Southern flank." Davis, in a note that Blair was given permission to show to Lincoln, expressed his willingness to enter upon peace negotiations, and the self-appointed emissary departed to deliver the message to his chief. A few days later Blair returned and continued to urge a conference between the heads of the two governments. Though he brought no letter from his chief, his close friendship with Lincoln led Davis to believe that the President of the United States would meet Confederate commissioners.



JEFFERSON DAVIS

Then for the first time since the capital had been moved to Richmond, Jefferson Davis asked Alexander Stephens to meet him in conference. The President wanted to hear what the Vice-President thought of the advisability of the scheme. Though Stephens believed that the plan was worth trying, he argued that the conference should be between Davis and Lincoln. No, the President countered, there should be three commissioners. Stephens suggested John A. Campbell, then assistant secretary of war; General Henry L. Benning, ex-justice of the Supreme Court of Georgia, then commanding a brigade near City Point; and Thomas S. Flournoy, of Virginia. When the President insisted that he could think of no better man to head a peace commission sent to negotiate with Lincoln than Alexander H. Stephens, there was probably irony in his words, which may or may not have escaped the astute Vice-President. At any rate, the Cabinet, called to consider the question, commissioned Stephens, Campbell and R. M. T. Hunter.

On January twenty-ninth the three men left Richmond. They were able during the day to proceed as far as Petersburg. On the twenty-first they were conveyed by railway to City Point. There Stephens met Grant for the first time. The General sat before an open fire in a log cabin, writing by the uncertain light of a kerosene lamp. He was simple, natural, gracious and unassuming in his manner. There were no guards or aides about him. Though his conversation was easy and fluent, it also possessed the quality of terse directness. While the commissioners remained for two days quartered on a dispatch boat, Stephens saw Grant frequently. Between the two men a friendship was born that later served Stephens in good stead. It was evident that the General was anxious both for the conference to be held and for peace to be restored. Yet, despite the passport he had given Blair, Lincoln was about to refuse to see the Confederate commissioners. However, upon the receipt

of Grant's telegram of February first, in which the General expressed his belief that the intentions of Stephens and Hunter were good and that their desire to restore peace was entirely sincere, Lincoln telegraphed that he would come to Hampton Roads.

He knew, of course, that his advisers were not in favor of peace negotiations. (That day Gideon Welles, Secretary of the United States Navy, was writing in his diary, "The President and Mr. Seward have gone to Hampton Roads to have an interview with the Rebel commissioners, Stephens, Hunter, and Campbell. None of the Cabinet were advised of this move, and, without exception, I think, it struck them unfavorably that the Chief Magistrate should have gone on such a mission.")

The next morning the commissioners went aboard the President's steamer. Because the wind was blowing cold across the bay, Alexander Stephens was wrapped in a great-coat, muffler and several shawls. He was standing in the saloon of Lincoln's steamer, beginning to unwind, when the President entered and stood looking on with that half-sad, half-merry smile of his. When the operation was ended, he advanced toward Stephens with outstretched hand. "Never," said he, "have I seen so small a nubbin come out of so much husk." Alexander Stephens laughed, and the ice was broken. The two men had been fast friends in Congress years before. Together they had worked as fellow Whigs. On the floor of Congress, they had both opposed the Mexican War. They had been among the first seven Young Indians who started the "Taylor for President" movement. After Lincoln's election, they had written each other friendly letters. Certainly now they were not personal enemies. Reminiscences of the old days in Congress would be vastly more pleasant than the mission that was now-bringing them together. So, for a while they talked of the past according to the anecdotal fashion in which both

men excelled. It was Alexander Stephens who directed the conversation into another channel.

"Well, Mr. President," he said, "is there no way of putting an end to the present trouble and bringing about a restoration of the general good feeling and harmony, existing between the different states and sections of the country?"

(Perhaps Lincoln noticed that he did not say "of the two countries." Had Jefferson Davis been present, how disturbed he would have been!)

At once Secretary Seward wanted to be assured that the conference would be entirely informal, with no note-taking by any one. There was general assent. Then Stephens repeated his question.

"There is only one way," Lincoln replied, "and that—for those resisting the law to cease resistance."

"Is there no other question that might temporarily engage our attention?" Stephens asked, adding that he had been led to believe that there was.

"I suppose you refer to something Mr. Blair has said," Lincoln countered and launched upon an elaborate explanation concerning the unauthorized nature of Blair's visit to Davis.

Stephens then introduced the Mexican situation and the violation of the Monroe Doctrine, which were matters of concern to both North and South.

"There can be no settlement without the recognition of the national authority of the United States—no armistice," Lincoln replied emphatically.

The argument that followed, though friendly and earnest on both sides, brought forth no plans for settlement. At last Judge Campbell asked Lincoln to state the terms upon which he would be willing to end the war.

"By the Confederate States disbanding their armies and permitting the national authorities to resume their functions," said Lincoln.

Further he declared that he would never change or modify his proclamation freeing the slaves.

Mr. Hunter interpolated his conviction that the condition of the emancipated slaves would be utterly pitiable. What did the President of the United States propose to do to help the poor blacks whom he had declared free? Lincoln replied by telling a story that concerned a destitute farmer and dependent pigs. The fellow had solved the problem by saying, "Let 'em root." The parable was a perfect answer to Mr. Hunter's question.

"That, Mr. President," said Stephens, "must be the origin of the adage, 'Root, pig, or perish.'"

"If the Confederate States should abandon the war," Stephens asked later, "would they be admitted to representation in Congress?"

Lincoln replied entirely in character that, while he thought they should be, he could not treat with parties in arms against the government.

"This has often been done," said Hunter, "especially by Charles the first when at civil war with the British parliament."

"I do not profess to be posted on history," Lincoln replied. "On all such matters, I will turn you over to Seward. All I distinctly recollect about the case of Charles is that he lost his head in the end."

Though the conference lasted for several hours, it came to nothing. When Stephens insisted that something be done to alleviate the suffering of the prisoners of war, Lincoln evaded the whole question by saying that all matters of exchange were in the hands of General Grant. Thus the conference ended. Before leaving the steamer, however, Stephens asked that his nephew, John A. Stephens, then in a northern prison, be exchanged. Lincoln promised to attend to the matter as soon as he reached Washington. In parting, Stephens expressed the hope that the President

would reconsider the question of an armistice and reverse his decision against it.

"Well, Stephens," Mr. Lincoln replied, "I do not think my mind will change, but I will reconsider."

The commissioners returned to Richmond, where Alexander Stephens, as Vice-President of the Confederate States, was to have his last interview as such with the President whom he had opposed through four tragic years.

Almost at the moment, Lincoln was reporting to his Cabinet the results of the Hampton Roads Conference. "The President and Mr. Seward got home this morning," Gideon Welles entered in his diary on February fourth. "Both speak of the interview with the Rebel commissioners as having been pleasant and without acrimony. . . . No results were obtained, but the discussion will be likely to tend to peace. In going the President acted from honest sincerity and without pretension. . . . He thinks that he, better than any other agent, can negotiate and arrange. Seward wants to do this."

Stephens was returning to Georgia to await the catastrophe, which he now believed to be inevitable. When the people of Richmond asked him to address them, he refused, for he was unwilling to impart hope that he himself did not feel. He could not know that Lincoln was keeping his promise to reconsider the decision that he had given the Confederate commissioners and that he was being thwarted by his Cabinet. According to Welles's entry in his diary on February sixth, "the President had matured a scheme, which he hoped would be successful in promoting peace. It was a proposition for paying the expenses of the war for two hundred days or four hundred millions, to the Rebel states, to be for the extinguishment of slavery, or for such purpose as the states were disposed. It did not meet with favor but was dropped."

Soon after Alexander Stephens reached Crawfordville,

his nephew arrived, bringing with him a letter from Abraham Lincoln. "According to our agreement," wrote the President, "your nephew, Lieutenant Stephens, goes to you, bearing this note. Please, in return, to select and send to me, that officer of the same rank imprisoned at Richmond whose physical condition most urgently requires his release."

On April ninth General Lee surrendered to General Grant.

At Liberty Hall the Vice-President of the Confederacy awaited the terrible aftermath of defeat.

CHAPTER XX

THE VENGEFUL AFTERMATH

ALEXANDER STEPHENS returned from his imprisonment at Fort Warren an old man. Yet, according to the calendar reading, he was but fifty-four. His hair, which had been chestnut brown on the day of his arrest, had become snow white. In color and texture his cheeks resembled a dried apricot. He walked with the tottering uncertainty of senescence. His deep-set eyes showed that he had suffered and that tragedy was then heavy upon him.

Georgia had been laid waste by the pillaging army that had so recently made its way to the sea. The people, in poverty and want, were mourning the dead and struggling to feed and clothe the living. The state loss in slave property had been estimated to be \$272,015,490. The land had fallen to half its former value. Over two thousand miles of railway had been stripped and ravaged. Nevertheless, from Liberty Hall Alexander Stephens began to preach his gospel of patience and industry. Good feeling between the sections of the country must be restored. Then through diligence the people could reclaim their lands. He did not believe that the North would crush the states that had surrendered. National prosperity depended too much on the prosperity of the South for so shortsighted a policy to be followed. Had he not talked with President Johnson? Was there not reason for him to know that the South would be given a chance? The Radicals who had opposed Lincoln's policies before the President's assassination and who were striving to control Johnson would fail in their diabolical schemes.

Starting with North Carolina, the President had appointed provisional governors for the returning states and was proceeding to reconstruct the South essentially according to Lincoln's plans, which had involved excluding the negro from the ballot box. During Alexander Stephens's imprisonment, suffrage for the former slaves had been agitated throughout the North. Stephens had not disapproved enfranchising the negro by a gradual process and had discussed with Johnson the scheme he had evolved. His attitude, however, upon his return to Georgia, was to accept whatever situation presented itself and make the best of it. With the rest of the South, he was grateful for peace. Now that the ports were open again, the states would resume the trade upon which they had depended in other days.

The Georgia legislature convened, quickly repealed the ordinance of secession, abolished slavery, ratified the thirteenth amendment, repudiated the war debt, passed an act allowing the freedmen to testify in courts, and remained in session till December 15, 1865.

Judge C. J. Jenkins, whom the people had elected governor, was officially recognized by Washington on December nineteenth. Reassembling on the fifth of January, the legislature elected Alexander H. Stephens and Herschel V. Johnson to represent Georgia in the Senate of the United States.

On George Washington's birthday, Stephens, addressing the legislature upon the condition of the country, urged patience, a liberal spirit of forbearance, and the abandonment of all ill-feeling as the only means by which peace could be maintained and happiness secured. The South, he said, could rely upon the restoration policies of the President. "We should accept the issues of war," he exhorted the lawmakers, "and abide by them in good faith. . . . The Constitution of the United States has been reordained as the organic law of our land. Whatever differences of opinion heretofore existed as to where our allegiance was due, none

for any practical purpose can exist now. . . . The whole United States, therefore, is now without question our country, to be cherished and defended as such by all our hearts and by all our arms."

Touching upon the new status of the negro, he pointed out to the legislators that changes must be made in the laws of the state. The negroes must be surrounded by protections. "They cultivated your fields, ministered to your personal wants, nursed and reared your children, and even in the hour of peril they were, in the main, true to you and yours. To them we owe a debt of gratitude as well as acts of kindness. . . . All obstacles, if there be any, should be removed. . . . Channels of education should be open to them. Schools and the usual means of moral and intellectual training should be encouraged amongst them. This is the dictate not only of what is right and just in itself, but it is also the promptings of the highest considerations of interest. It is difficult to conceive a greater evil or curse that could befall our country, stricken and distressed as it now is, than for so large a portion of its population to be reared in ignorance, depravity, and vice."

The people of Georgia, accustomed as they were to listen to the words of the little leader whom they loved, were not the only ones who were impressed by Alexander Stephens's words. The speech, appearing in full in the *New York Times*, then the organ of the administration, made a profound impression upon the country.

Stephens was speaking, however, not to cajole the North but to quiet Georgia and to influence her to act constructively. As evidence of the effectiveness of his words, in less than a month the legislature passed an act, removing all legal disabilities from the negro.

In Congress Thaddeus Stevens, venomous in old age, had already begun the poisonous work that was to make greater wreckage of the country, which wise and good men were

trying to rebuild. Stevens's resolution, providing for a joint committee from the House and the Senate to report whether or not the Southern States were entitled to representation in Congress, had passed in December. Nevertheless, in April, 1866, Andrew Johnson proclaimed that reconstruction had been accomplished and that peace had been restored.

By the time the Georgia senators and representatives reached Washington the Radical Congress had decided to deny seats to southern members. The fight between Johnson and the Radicals had been acute since the executive veto of the Freedmen's Bill and the speech of February twenty-second, in which Johnson had announced that he looked upon Thaddeus Stevens, Charles Sumner and Wendell Phillips "as being opposed to the fundamental principles of this government." The breach between the President and the Radicals had widened when on March twenty-seventh Johnson vetoed the Civil Rights Bill "as a stride toward centralization and the concentration of all legislative power in the national government." On the evening of April sixth the Senate passed the bill over the President's veto. Alexander Stephens sat quietly in the gallery as the vote was taken. He knew that the omens were against the continuance of Johnson's policies and that from henceforth there would be a fight to the finish between the President and the Radicals.

General Grant had invited Stephens to the reception he and Mrs. Grant were giving that evening. There were rumors that Thaddeus Stevens and his crowd intended to be present in large numbers and to appropriate Grant or at least to convey to the public the impression that the General was siding with them against the administration. A motley assemblage gathered in the drawing-rooms of the Grants. Alexander Stephens was circulating through the crowd, meeting old acquaintances—a strange little figure mid the glitter and glamour—when the President and his

two daughters arrived. Then came Montgomery Blair and some of his ladies. When Thaddeus Stevens, Trumbull and others of Stevens's group entered, amazement and disappointment were written upon their faces. They had not believed that Andrew Johnson would appear in public immediately after the blow that had been dealt him by the Senate. It was evident that the presence of Alexander Stephens was also disconcerting. Now it appeared that they could not at once offset the mischief Grant had done by reporting after his trip through the former Confederacy "that the people were more loyal and better disposed than he had expected to find them and that every consideration called for the early re-establishment of the Union." Nor could they claim that the man who had invited the former Vice-President of the Confederacy to his home favored the harsh policy toward the South summed up in the Radical pronouncement: "The conquered Rebels are at the mercy of the conquerors." Mid the exultation over the senatorial vote, there were frequent expressions of vexation that such a strange assortment of people had attended General Grant's reception. Thaddeus Stevens was merely gathering more venom to spew upon the South.

On April sixteenth Alexander Stephens gave his testimony before the Reconstruction Committee. He answered without fear and without malice all the questions that were put to him. He said that he believed the people of Georgia were anxious to assume their former place in the Union. Though they had thought secession necessary, they had abandoned the idea that liberty could be obtained through force. He was speaking merely for himself, however, when he expressed the opinion that the breaking down of the constitutional barriers during the war were the reasons for the change of attitude. Though the state was accepting emancipation calmly, it was opposed to the enfranchisement of the negro, he said. The question of suffrage, he believed to

be one that constitutionally belonged to the state. Yes, he had opposed secession—as a matter of policy and not because he questioned the right. The war, he considered a practical settlement of the issues involved.

Despite his brave words and despite his faith in many northern leaders, Alexander Stephens returned to Georgia pessimistic as to the future of the South. He could not have known that even while he was in Washington "The Reign of Terror" was being inaugurated. Yet vague forebodings dragged upon his mind.

Georgia had been laid waste, and there were few to rebuild it, for the negroes had at last discovered that they were free. Free to earn a living, to educate their children, to till the soil and make crops that would bring them money? Not at all! They were free to lie idle in the pleasant summer sun, frolic through the short nights and to sleep by day, free to vent their passions at religious revivals that were followed by sexual excesses and raids upon pigsties and barnyards. Children they were, suddenly released from supervision. Northerners had come South for the purpose of turning them from their former masters. The negroes listened and paid guileless heed to what they heard. Across the state line in South Carolina Mrs. Chesnut was writing in her diary, "The negroes have flocked to the Yankee squad." One old freedman was saying cheerfully, "If you want anything, call for Sambo—I means call me Mr. Samuel—dat my name now." Negro girls were adorning themselves fantastically and coquetting with the Yankee soldiers. The slaves believed that the land that had belonged to their masters would be given to them. Grant, in his report, had credited the agents of the Freedmen's Bureau with telling the poor blacks that such were the plans of the government. All night the air was filled with weird chantings from the revivals. In the mornings there were no negro laborers in the fields, no cooks in the kitchens.

The conditions described in South Carolina prevailed also in Georgia.

But the negroes at Liberty Hall were still boasting that they belonged to Marse Aleck. Uncle Dick was then eighty years old and his wife, Aunt Mat, about seventy. Too old to work, they gave a pleasant bit of color to the place—Aunt Mat in her gay bandanna and Uncle Dick with his predilection for red shirts. Then down at the Homestead there was another pensioner—Uncle Ben, who had belonged to Alexander Stephens's father and who years before had begged Marse Aleck to buy him. Eliza and Harry and all their dusky tribe, which had sprung successively into being after Marse Aleck's consent to the marriage of his Eliza to Googer's Harry, were as loyal as ever. Ellen, aged fifteen, and Tim, aged twelve, were old enough to be quite useful, the girl helping her mother with the cooking and Tim acting as serving boy and sleeping in the room with his master. The little fellows merely romped on the lawn and were petted and scolded and spoiled by Marse Aleck. Then there was a young negro who went by the name of George. Assistant gardener was the title he used, but as a matter of fact, he was merely Harry's right-hand man. While Alexander Stephens was at Fort Warren, the negroes had kept the place in ship-shape, quite as though it had belonged to them—and that, in reality, was how they thought of it. Now, though they were getting weekly wages, out of which they were supposed to buy their clothes and their pleasures, they were not conscious of changed status. Clothes they had always had—and very good ones at that, for they knew how to wheedle from Marse Aleck just what they wanted; and there had never been any scarcity of spending money, with the tips that were for ever jingling in their pockets. Their cottages, always comfortable, were exactly as they had been before the war. Even the children could not see that freedom brought any advantages,

for Marse Aleck was still insisting that they work at the difficult task of learning to read and write and figure. "The children take learning in broken doses," wrote a visitor at Liberty Hall in 1866, "that is, they study a very little and play a great deal."

In addition to Sir Bingo Binks, Troup and Frank were two other canine successors of Rio. Very much spoiled dogs they were, though by no means replacing Rio in their master's affection. But dogs and negroes were not the only companions of Alexander Stephens at Liberty Hall. His nephew, John Alexander, one of the children his brother had willed him, the same young man whom Lincoln had exchanged for an officer of equal rank, was practising law in Crawfordville and serving as his uncle's secretary. Then the old man, Quinea O'Neal, whom the village had long ago dubbed "The Parson," was living at Liberty Hall, pottering about the yard or doing nothing at all as the notion struck his erratic fancy. Linton Andrew, the nephew who had so cheerfully entered the army to fight for the fair sex, had married his pretty Lucinda Frances and was living in Crawfordville. With guests dropping in constantly, it was never hard to get up a game of whist. Yet what an ordeal it was for Lucinda, who was commandeered so often to make a fourth at the table! She testifies to this day how her knees shook beneath her and how the cards fluttered between her trembling fingers. Uncle Aleck took his game with such desperate seriousness, and he had such little patience with players as inexperienced as she! Yet there was nothing to do but draw up a chair when Uncle Aleck made his request—really a command for all around him. Why was it that Mr. Stephens was always obeyed? Mrs. Linton Andrew Stephens even now isn't quite sure. There was just something indefinable that made him that way. No one ever thought of opposing him. He didn't have to be firm, for his very eyes commanded. Then, too, he was so gen-

erous and kind and considerate except at the card table that it would have seemed a shame not to try to please him. Yet how he could scold at whist! The little bride of Linton Andrew used to feel very small and inconsequential when she sat across the table from him, knowing that at any moment some false lead of hers would occasion an outburst that would set her teeth chattering for the rest of the evening. It did no good to try to hide. If Uncle Aleck needed another player, he would find her, and she would have to spend a wretched two hours or so. It was perfectly clear, too, that he was not really angry. When he held those thirteen cards in his hand, he seemed not to be remembering that there had been a war or an underground cell at Fort Warren or that the country was in the throes of radical policies.

The summer of 1866 held another interest for the Vice-President who had lost his country and for the Senator who had been deprived of his seat in Congress and for the lawyer who was now too ill to accept the cases that he might have been trying. Henry Cleveland was collecting Stephens's speeches and gathering material for a biographical sketch of the statesman. It was most important that no errors creep in, for there had been misrepresentation enough. Toombs said that Aleck would never be satisfied until he had corrected the proof of his obituary. Well, let Bob have his little joke! Alexander Stephens would do all in his power to set himself right with the public.

Poor Bob! Aleck was thinking of him often these days. How much trouble he had caused himself by escaping through the back door when Captain Saint came to arrest him! It would have been better to endure an underground cell in a northern prison. At least Stephens was now at home, while Toombs was an exile from America, after having wandered through Georgia for six months before he found a way to evade the vigilant Yankees. Stephens had

heard part of the story from Linton at Fort Warren. The rest he had gathered after his return. Then, too, a letter had come from Toombs, describing his experience as a fugitive, how he had finally reached Mobile, where Miss Augusta Evans and her father, dismissing the servants that there might be no chance of his identity being discovered, had entertained him until he could get out of the country. At once Alexander Stephens wrote a note of appreciation to the authoress. "I have just received a letter from Mr. Toombs," he said, "who has been so united with me in friendship and destiny all our lives, giving such account of the kind attentions from you and your father while in Mobile, that I can not forbear to thank you and him for it in the same strain and terms as if these attentions had been rendered to myself. What you did for my friend in this particular, you did for me."

Castor was missing his Pollux, and Georgia was needing her Toombs. On June eighth Congress passed the fourteenth amendment. Its ratification was now before the legislatures of the states. The amendments safeguarded the citizenship of the negroes, virtually based congressional representation among the number of voters, disqualified for federal office all persons who had engaged in the rebellion or who had "given aid and comfort to the enemy," and repudiated the Confederate debt. When Alexander Stephens had appeared before the Reconstruction Committee, he had said, "The people of Georgia feel that they are entitled under the Constitution of the United States to representation. . . . I do not think they should ratify the amendment suggested (one to base representation substantially upon the voters) as a condition precedent to her being admitted to representation in Congress."

Still hopeful, Stephens attended the National Union Convention held in Philadelphia on August fourteenth. The gathering had been instigated by Seward and Weed, with

the concurrence of the President and Henry J. Raymond, Editor of the *New York Times*. In Georgia Joe Brown presided over the meeting called to elect delegates. Alexander Stephens, Herschel V. Johnson, A. H. Chappell, and D. A. Walker were chosen to represent the state. Linton Stephens attended as one of the district representatives. Moderate men from the South joined with Republicans and Democrats from the North who wanted to put an end to the strife that had continued long enough. From twelve to fifteen thousand delegates gathered in the gigantic wigwam built for the occasion. The spirit was good. Arm in arm walked the delegates from Massachusetts and the delegates from South Carolina, with General Couch, of Massachusetts, and Governor Orr, of South Carolina, leading them. So throughout the country the meeting was known as the Arm-in-Arm Convention. "Slavery is abolished and forever prohibited," said Judge Verger, of Mississippi, "and nobody wants it back again." Governor Graham replied that he could safely say that North Carolinians agreed with Verger and that the sentiment was echoed by the entire South. The convention passed resolutions, endorsing President Johnson's reconstruction program.

Nevertheless, the Radicals, headed by Thaddeus Stevens, were marching on as surely as Sherman had trampled the state of Georgia on his way to the sea. The Radical victory at the polls in the fall of 1866 officially inaugurated the Reign of Terror in the South.

At home in Crawfordville, Alexander Stephens was making no fight against the military rule that had been inflicted upon the state. The hope that had radiated from his speech before the Georgia legislature had utterly disappeared. What chance was there that his feeble voice could be heard above the clamor of the Radicals? The President, swinging through the country on a speech-making tour, was meeting with insults at every stop. In Cleveland cries of

"Traitor," "Hang Jeff Davis," "You abandoned your party" and other interruptions made speaking out of the question. In Chicago the audience showed as little decorum. Certain that he could be of no service to his people, Alexander Stephens determined to write a book. He was visiting his friend, Richard Johnston, in December, 1866, when he reached his decision. He would adopt the dialogue form after the manner of the ancients, he said. Then forthwith he took to reading Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*. "Listen to this," he said, looking up as he began the second book, "pain is no evil, the fellow says. If a calculus had been in any of their kidneys, they would have thought it as bad as I do." He had not progressed a great deal farther when he arrived at a defalcation of Demetrius to the Stoic doctrine because of a disorder in the kidneys. "I told you so," the little sufferer chuckled. "Kidney trouble is enough to rob the staunchest Stoic of his philosophy."

There was a wedding in Crawfordville that December. Stephens's widowed niece, Mary Stephens Reid, was married to William H. Corry on December twelfth. After the death of her first husband Mollie, with her little son, had lived at her mother's home in Crawfordville. She, too, was one of the children John L. Stephens had left to his brother. The morning of the wedding Uncle Aleck sent for her.

"Well, Mollie," he said, "you have two things I want you to give me. May I have them?"

Mollie was amazed. Uncle Aleck asking favors of people—Uncle Aleck who was accustomed to give, not to receive!

"Why, of course," she replied. "You're welcome to anything I have."

"Well, they are possessions of yours to which I've taken rather a fancy. That little marble-top table I want. There's a spot in my parlor that needs it."

Mollie laughed.

"The table's yours, Uncle Aleck. Now what's the other possession you're coveting?"

"The little Leidy. I want you to give him to me to rear and to educate."

Mollie was no longer smiling.

"I don't know what mother will think of that, Uncle Aleck," she said. "She's had Leidy with her so long. Since all of us are marrying and leaving her, she's been counting on having Leidy. I'm afraid you've asked a favor I can't grant."

There was a twinkle in Stephens's eye.

"Who said anything about taking Leidy away from his grandmother?" he countered. "You don't object to my educating him, do you?"

Then Mollie assured him that the favor could be granted. Somehow, as long as she had known him, she had never quite understood Uncle Aleck. She remembered that once, when she had attempted to kiss him, he had waved her aside with a crisp, "Now, none of that, Mollie!" Yet she had known that he wanted the affection that he seemed unable to accept. Instead, he showered his family with gifts and received nothing in return. How he had outfitted her brothers who had been living at the Old Homestead! Such an array of china and silver as he had sent then—platters large enough for hotel service! How absurdly full he had kept their larder! Mollie was very grateful to Uncle Aleck for wanting her little mahogany table. (Years later, when writing his will, Alexander Stephens remembered that the table had belonged to Mollie and bequeathed it to her.)

Early the following year the book was begun. John Grier Stephens, another son of Aleck's brother John, served as amanuensis. The young man soon saw that he had undertaken an enormous task, for Uncle Aleck was outrageously particular concerning not only historical detail but English

as well. Once when John read a chapter aloud, the author pointed out a mistake in grammar that must be corrected. "Oh, Uncle Aleck," the nephew argued, a trifle exasperated, "there isn't one person in a thousand that would notice that."

"But that's the very one I wouldn't want to see it," Stephens replied.

Work was Alexander Stephens's salvation during the terrible year of 1867. On March second the Reconstruction Act was passed by Congress: the Southern States were divided into five military districts; all male citizens "of whatever race, color, or previous condition" should have the right to vote, "except such as may be disfranchised for participation in the rebellion"; conventions must be held to frame new state constitutions that would provide for negro suffrage; when the resultant legislatures of these states should have ratified the fourteenth amendment, and when that amendment should have become part of the Constitution, the senators and representatives of the states, on taking the "iron-clad oath," should be admitted to Congress. On March twenty-third teeth were put in the earlier act when provision was made for registration and election. No one could qualify as a voter until he had sworn that he had not taken part in the rebellion. Georgia was at the mercy of the slackers, the negroes, and the northerners who had recently migrated into her territory. Toombs was still out of the state; Howell Cobb was silent; Joe Brown had gone over to the Republican ranks, declaring that the only hope of the state lay in submission; Alexander Stephens, sick and hopeless, was trying through work to forget himself and his surroundings and was taking little part in public affairs. To Dr. E. M. Chapin he wrote on March twenty-ninth that in his judgment white men who could qualify as voters should do so.

"The Congressional plan of Reconstruction will be car-

ried out," he said. "Whether the whites who are not disfranchised join in forming a new organization or not . . . I think they should be governed by the public interest only. By taking part they may secure control, and thus save themselves from domination by the black race." He had already written Montgomery Blair concerning the colonization plan Blair was proposing. He believed that it was to the interest of both races to live together; removal would be enormously expensive and would bring upon the negroes shocking suffering and loss of life; moreover, the blacks could not maintain civilization except in contact with a type higher than their own.

Finally was heard the voice of the man who had so long been Stephens's enemy and who, because of many similarities of characteristics and purposes, should have been friendly with the other great statesman. On July 10, 1867, Ben Hill spoke to the people of Atlanta on the Military Bill. Alexander Stephens, reading the account of that speech, could not fail to applaud the gift of invective that had once cut him to the quick. "Ye hypocrites! Ye whited sepulchres! Ye mean in your hearts to deceive him and buy the negro vote for your own benefit!" he said to the Bureau agents and carpetbaggers. "Ye hell-born rioters in sacred things!" he denounced the Radicals. What should Georgians do? In piercing words Hill thundered the advice that Stephens was giving in milder fashion. The people should register. By their ballots they should free the state of the fakers, quacks and demagogues.

But Ben Hill was only forty-four—over six feet of vigorous manhood. Alexander Stephens was fifty-five—a frail body wracked by pain. He was writing a book that would explain to the world the causes underlying the war and perhaps would reawaken the Anglo-Saxon love of liberty. *A Constitutional View of the War between the States* it would be called. At present he could do no more.

Though peace reigned at Liberty Hall, the rest of the state was in turmoil. The Supreme Court of the United States having decided that the Military Act did not come within its jurisdiction, the generals in charge of the districts were continuing their work undisturbed. General Meade, to whom Georgia had been assigned, removed Governor Jenkins from office and gave the place to one of his generals. Jenkins fled, carrying the state seal with him. In Georgia the people were too poor and too crushed to do a great deal of protesting. The cotton crop, upon which their prosperity depended, had been small, of course. The large production in India had lowered the price. "The whole South is settled and quiet," wrote Frances Butler, a young woman who had returned after spending the period of the war in the North, "and the people too ruined and crushed to do anything against the government even if they felt so inclined, and all are returning to their former peaceful pursuits, trying to rebuild their fortunes and thinking of nothing else. Yet the treatment we receive from the government becomes more and more severe every day. The one subject southerners discuss whenever they meet is, 'What is to become of us?'" Of the one hundred and seventy delegates that met at the state convention, thirty-three were negroes. Yet under the leadership of Joe Brown, who was trying to justify his apostasy, a fairly good constitution was passed. Though universal negro suffrage was adopted, no white man was disfranchised.

By the end of December the first volume of *A Constitutional View of the War between the States* was finished. Stephens had written a profound exposition of constitutional government, and he had given a name to the recent struggle. Often in speeches he had used the term "War between the States." Now he was to see that term crystallized on the cover of a book that would be read throughout the land. He had, moreover, by carefully documented argument,

proved that it was not a "civil war" that had just ended. Alexander Stephens carried his book to Philadelphia. Then, while it was being put through the press, he visited Richard Johnston, who had moved near Baltimore. When the galley proof was before him, came the discouragement that every author knows. The book was not so good as he had thought it. Why had it ever occurred to him that he could be a writer? He adopted without protest all the changes Linton had suggested—and then in a letter, "I am fully convinced that writing is not my forte. The truth is I have no forte. I am fit for nothing and never ought to have attempted to do what nature never designed me to do."

Perhaps it was Linton's marriage to Mary Salter the year before that was inducing the melancholy moods. Not a whit, however, had he receded from the estimate of Miss Mary's worth. She was as charming as he had thought her when she and her mother had visited him at Fort Warren. He might have known that her reading of *Enoch Arden* that day in the prison was irresistible. Aleck himself had admitted that never before had he been able to see any great beauty in Tennyson. Still, it must have been hard a second time to relinquish Linton to some one else.

As though nephritic calculus and malaria and neuralgia and all the other ailments were not enough for any one man, Stephens slipped upon the icy street in Philadelphia and was so severely injured that he had to do his proof reading in bed. All the while he was watching the trend of events at the capital. The House had passed articles of impeachment against the President. The injustice of the Radical attack upon Johnson distressed him no little. Here was another man martyred by the opponents of constitutional liberty. Would there never be an end to the infamies that had been committed in the name first of freeing the negro and then of safeguarding his citizenship? "The Pres-

ident's letter to the Senate, in answer to their resolutions on the subject, is an able paper," he wrote, and added prophetically, "It will forever justify his acts in the minds of rightly thinking men, whatever may be the results of the impeachment. I have said nothing to you on politics lately. I feel like a passenger who has no control in the direction of the ship." In April Alexander Stephens returned to Crawfordville.

That month the Republicans nominated Rufus Bullock as their candidate for governor. A handsome, easy-going man he was, with a pleasant smile and ability to promote his own interests. For nine years he had been a resident of Georgia, unknown in public circles. The Democrats nominated John B. Gordon and worked jointly for his election and for the defeat of the Constitution. Joe Brown was for Bullock and the Constitution. Alexander Stephens occupied a middle ground. He wanted Gordon for governor, but he thought it was just as well to accept the Constitution. "If the Radicals continue in power in the nation," he said, "we could not expect to get a better state constitution. . . . Under it, all whites as well as blacks are entitled to vote. If this constitution should be rejected another disfranchising a larger class of whites as in Tennessee and Alabama might be put upon us."

Bullock became governor; the constitution stood; eighteen Democrats and twenty-six Republicans were elected to the Senate; and the political division of the House was uncertain. Twenty-eight negroes became legislators.

In July the fireworks began. Toombs was back from exile; Ben Hill had not lost his oratorical power; Howell Cobb emerged from retirement; and one Raphael J. Moses leaped into prominence. The Democrats gathered at a mighty convention. Beneath an arbor of bushes stood the speakers, while mobs sweltered on plank seats. All the pent-up hatred and suppressed resentment of the indignities

that had been visited upon the South found expression in the words of the orators. The Radicals, the carpetbaggers, the scalawags, and the southern reconstructionists were pelted with sharpened words. The abuse of Joe Brown for his defection was savage. In his excitement Toombs threw his hat into the crowd. A bright-faced boy picked it up and brought it to him. The lad was Henry Grady, who was later to play an important part in reconstructed Georgia. Perhaps that day inflammable material within him was ignited by the fires of southern oratory. At any rate, Toombs, Hill, Cobb and Moses succeeded in waking the people from their hopeless apathy.

When the legislature declared Bullock governor for four years, the applause was slight. "Go to it, niggers!" called a voice from the galleries, and the twenty-eight dusky assemblymen responded with corn-field whoops. The Governor's message was short, for Bullock was a man of action—not of words. Then the legislature proceeded to the election of senators. Joe Brown, Aleck Stephens, Joshua Hill, C. H. Hopkins were the candidates. The Democrats had but one objective and that was to defeat Brown. On the first ballot the vote stood Brown—102; Stephens—96; Hill—13; Hopkins—1. Immediately the Stephens phalanx rushed to Hill. Brown was defeated by sixteen votes. There was a tornado of applause. Hats were hurled into the air. Men clambered across desks. Joe Brown, who had deserted the party, had been licked! The police were called to restore order. Georgians did not realize that they had elected a Republican. They knew only that his name was not Brown. Hill declared his party affiliation, and the Democrats ceased their exultations. It was dawning upon them that their Little Aleck had been sacrificed.

Such a legislature! Carpetbaggers, scalawags, and negroes who could not read and write! A few men of another sort, however, had crept in, some Republicans, some

Democrats. It was better than the South Carolina legislature, where there were eighty-five negroes, fifty-two carpetbaggers and scalawags, and twenty-one Democrats, for in Georgia the white Republicans fast sickened of the situation. H. I. Kimball, with his fingers dipping in the treasury, while the negroes sang:

“H. I. Kimball’s on de flo’.
’Tain’t gwine rain no mo’!”

Carpetbaggers from the West serving as Bullock’s henchmen! Georgians were not blaming the freedmen; they were sorry for the poor creatures who in their ignorance were following corrupt leaders. Nevertheless, the legislature expelled the negro members—but not before Georgia had complied with those requirements upon which her readmission into the Union depended.

At Liberty Hall Alexander Stephens was far from happy. He was being criticized by the press throughout the South for his inaction and for his willingness to see the fourteenth amendment ratified by the Southern States. As usual he suffered because of the popular misunderstanding of his attitude. “To defeat it at this step of the question could do us no possible good that I could see, but might do us harm. It would continue us under military rule. . . . Enough states have already adopted it to make it part of the Constitution.”

Then, too, some of the reviews of his book were unfavorable. Dr. A. T. Bledsoe in *The Southern Quarterly Review* had been lengthily critical. Therefore, it behooved the little man, who never left anything unanswered, to prepare a still more lengthy criticism of Doctor Bledsoe’s review. This was published in *The Baltimore Statesman* and called forth a rejoinder from Bledsoe. So for ever new links were being welded in the chain. Alexander Stephens was kept exceedingly busy taking critics to task for what

they had said. Later he was to collect a number of the articles and, in further vindication of his public stands, to publish them in a book which he styled *The Reviewers Reviewed*.

The first volume of *A Constitutional View of the War between the States* was going well. Already it was bringing in returns that compensated for the time the author had taken from the practise of law. Perhaps it was in recognition of the merits of the book that the University of Georgia offered Alexander Stephens the chair of Political Science and History. This time there was a bit of variety in the ailment upon which his declining was based, for he was suffering with rheumatism. The pain in his knees was so acute that he was scarcely able to hobble about the house.

According to a story that is still told in Georgia, it was during this year that Stephens and Toombs together entered a crowded train and that Stephens sat beside a countryman, who immediately showed signs of opening friendly conversation.

"Stranger," asked the man, "what might be your name?"

"Stephens," came the piping reply with meticulous emphasis upon the last syllable.

"Stephens! And what might your first name be?"

"Aleck Stephens. Alexander H. Stephens," said the former Vice-President in thin shrillness.

"Wall, wall," replied the countryman, "I wonder if ye be airy kin to Bill Stephens, the blacksmith."

Toombs, who had been listening to the dialogue, leaped to his feet, throwing both his mighty arms into the air.

"My God!" he roared to the astonishment of the other passengers. "Such is fame!"

"Now I see," Stephens flashed, "why it was Robert Toombs could wander through Georgia six months without being discovered even though there was a price on his head."

It would have been better perhaps if the rheumatism had continued. It might have prevented the walk that caused Stephens to be lame the remainder of his life. Late in February, 1869, he and the little negro boy, Quin, were rambling together across a field, the boy a few paces behind his master. A fence and a large iron gate separated one pasture from another. Until Mr. Stephens's hand was actually on the gate, it probably had not occurred to Quin that Marse Aleck would try to open it. Then he called in terror, "Marse Aleck, don't open dat gate." But Alexander Stephens, who was not used to receiving orders from small negro boys, gave the gate a tug. It fell upon him. In answer to Quin's screams for help, Mr. John Aiken arrived. Mr. Stephens was taken to the home of Mr. Rhodes and later to Liberty Hall. "Effen Marse Aleck had er minded me, he wouldn't er got hurt," the weeping lad told Harry and Eliza and all the other servants who were blaming him for neglected stewardship. The accident was the finishing touch to the invalidism that had cursed Alexander Stephens since early boyhood. An injured hip kept him confined to his bed for weeks and condemned him afterward to crutches and a wheel-chair. He never referred to the accident, and he allowed no specific mention of its nature in the biography that was published during his life. It was rheumatism, he said, that caused his lameness.

While Alexander Stephens was trying to recover, in order to complete the second volume of his book, Georgia was again feeling the weight of the iron hand. By expelling the negroes from her legislature and by seating therein white men ineligible under the fourteenth amendment, she had incurred the displeasure of the authorities. Her senators had been admitted. The forty-first Congress, however, assembling in March, was shutting out her representatives and hearing the clamor that she be remanded to military rule. Then on December twenty-second under radical pres-



AUNT ELIZA

Who reigned supreme in "Marse Aleck's" kitchen and Mary Frances Holden, granddaughter of Mr. Stephens' niece, Mollie.

sure Congress passed an important act: members of the Georgia legislature must take oath that they were not ineligible under the fourteenth amendment or that their disabilities had been removed; no negro might be excluded on account of his color; the President should employ military force to execute the act; and Georgia must ratify the fifteenth amendment before her senators and representatives could be admitted to Congress. General Terry forthwith was placed in command of Georgia to perpetrate the outrage known as "Terry's Purge." Twenty-four Democrats were ousted from the legislature and replaced by Republicans, and the negroes were returned. Immediately the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments were ratified.

In the meantime Bullock was showing signs of nervousness. Military rule could not last indefinitely. Another election was near at hand. It would be well to prolong the régime of the present legislature that seemed to have little inclination toward an investigation. There were a great many things that it would never do for even the Radicals to discover about Bullock. For instance, the matter of the railroad, to which Georgia had a sentimental attachment that had increased since the war! One of Stephens's first speeches in the legislature had concerned the project in its early stages. Under Brown's administration the road had put money into the coffers of the state. Now it ran through the very land upon which General Johnston had repelled Sherman's advances. The road was no longer paying; it was creating a debt. Many deduced that Bullock and his henchmen had pocketed the profits. Now the Governor was proposing that there be no other election till the fall of 1872. In behalf of his prolongation scheme, he was lobbying in Washington earnestly and unscrupulously, giving parties, entertaining the congressmen at his rooms—with Georgia paying the bill. But Bullock went too far. Perhaps because Congress saw through his scheme or perhaps

because Ben Hill made a visit to Washington, on July fifteenth Georgia's right to hold an election in November, 1870, was affirmed.

In August the Democrats met in convention for the purpose of reorganizing their party. Sane men had decided that nothing could be accomplished by inaction. On the plans for the meeting Alexander Stephens had been at work, though Linton was to be his mouthpiece. The brother prepared ringing resolutions that were intended to sound the note which the trumpets were to continue until the people were awakened. Linton introduced the resolutions. Unanimously adopted, they became the new Georgia Platform. The little Moses, who could not leave his wheel-chair, was again leading Georgia out of the wilderness, with his brother Aaron to speak for him. Again constitutional liberty was the theme—and the variations were slight. The state party must stand on the principles of the Democratic Party of the Union, said the resolutions. That this is a union of states and that the doctrine of state rights and state equality is indestructible, was reaffirmed. Georgians were urged to cooperate at the approaching election to change the present usurping and corrupt administration by placing in power men true to the principles of constitutional liberty and to the faithful and economical administration of public affairs.

The election witnessed the redemption of the state from carpetbag rule. Bullock had tried to prevent just what happened. He had induced the legislators to extend the election over a three-day period in order that the negroes might be given a chance to repeat from precinct to precinct. He had put through a law providing that no votes should be challenged and declaring that the poll tax should no longer be a requisite to voting. On election day Linton Stephens was active. For his vigilance in challenging the votes of repeaters and for insisting on the payment of the poll tax

as a constitutional requirement, he was arrested, and, upon refusing to give bond, was put in jail. There was excitement throughout all Georgia during the election. The new attitude on the part of the whites was terrifying the negroes, who were beginning to decide that perhaps, after all, this was a white man's country. Linton's arrest provided the Stephenses an opportunity to restate their interpretation of the Constitution, for Linton, in consultation with his brother, prepared his own defense.

"The public mind needs an awakening," Alexander Stephens wrote in characteristic vein after Linton had delivered himself before the court. "Particular cases have always been the immediate occasions of awakening. Most fortunate it is for any man, so far as it relates to his fame and distinction, to be the one prominent in the case of the awakening."

Linton's address was delivered on January 23, 1871, before a federal commission. The case was dropped—as Georgians might have expected in the light of President Grant's reply given to Bullock's committee that waited upon him, charging frauds in the Georgia election. "Gentlemen," said the President, "the people of Georgia may govern themselves as they please, without any interference on my part, so long as they violate no federal law."

Those words officially ended the Reign of Terror in Georgia.

CHAPTER XXI

THE HARVEST YEARS

JANUARY, 1872! Alexander Stephens was nearing the end of his sixtieth year. He was condemned to crutches and a wheel-chair. He had been intermittently ill for months. Nevertheless, he was still very much alive. Part II of *A Constitutional View of the War between the States* had been completed. He had written *A School History of the United States*, also in two volumes. He had been teaching law to five young men, who were living with him at Liberty Hall. Zeno I. Fitzpatrick, Juriah H. Casey, Paul C. Hudson, William G. Stephens and John T. Olive they were. In compliance with their request that he set down the principles that he had taught them, he had published a pamphlet on the study of law. He had read all the reviews of his books, and he had answered those that were unfavorable. Fortunately, many had pleased him. *The London Saturday Review*, for instance, had said that the *Constitutional View* showed "an unequalled knowledge of facts, an abundant collection of authority, and a remarkable clearness of constitutional reasoning" and that "on the whole, no contribution to the history of the Civil War of equal value had yet been made." Through Consul George C. Tanner, the King of Belgium was reported to have said something equally superlative.

The preceding year had encompassed an unpleasant experience that had caused Stephens a great deal of concern—as seriously as he always took any matter that might reflect upon his integrity or judgment. It was evident that under the Bullock administration there had been perpetrated in

connection with the Georgia State Railroad frauds that had lined the pockets of the Governor and his henchman, Foster Blodgett, the road superintendent. Having already drawn six hundred thousand dollars of state funds for maintenance, Bullock asked for an additional five hundred thousand dollars for repairs. Then it had been decided to lease the road. Brown organized a company and secured the lease. Stephens became one of the stockholders. As far as he knew, the transaction had been entirely straight. Then had come a letter from Toombs, which expressed the hope that the report of Aleck's connection with the lease was a mistake. He dubbed the lessees "a lot of the greatest rogues on the continent, your name excepted." From many quarters there were cries of "Swindle!" Alexander Stephens connected with a swindle! He made an investigation and discovered that, though a bid of thirty-four thousand, five hundred dollars had been made, Brown had leased the road for twenty-five thousand dollars a month. Then Stephens drew out of the company, transferring his share of the stock to the state. He had no intention of being connected with a transaction that even suggested the possibility of fraud.

In 1872 he was again stirring the stew within the political kettle. With Archibald M. Speights and J. Henly Smith, he had become co-proprietor of *The Atlanta Sun* and, as political editor of the paper, was conducting a valiant fight against the coalition of Liberal Republicans and Democrats known as "The New Departure." Writing ponderous and erudite editorials that scarcely any one read, the little cripple was again in the fray and enjoying himself immensely.

October of the year before, the terrible Bullock had been forced to resign. The regeneration of Georgia was completed on January 12, 1872, when James M. Smith, a Democrat, was inaugurated governor. Politically the re-

spectable whites of Georgia, along with those of the sister states of the late Confederacy, had swung in line with the party of the "Solid South," which must henceforth present an adamant front against Republicanism. Peace had been restored. Miss Frances Butler, who had written two years before that "the negroes were almost in a state of mutiny," had declared that the negroes were then "behaving like lambs." The general amnesty of May twenty-second had restored citizenship to such men as Alexander Stephens. Altogether, it seemed that the Georgia Platform, framed in 1870 by Linton and Aleck Stephens, was sound enough and sufficiently productive of success to continue to embody the principles of the Democrats of Georgia. The Stephenses, therefore, thought consolidation with the Liberal Republicans the height of foolishness. Grant's opponents within the President's party had met in Cincinnati in May and nominated Horace Greeley. The regular Republicans on June fifth had nominated Grant. In Georgia Alexander Stephens, through the columns of his paper, and Toombs, in forensic, were fighting the proposed consolidation of Democrats and Liberal Republicans.

On June twenty-sixth there was a Democratic convention at which the thermodynamics may have been caused somewhat by the weather. Alexander Stephens was on hand, attempting to be dispassionately persuasive. Toombs, who—never having asked for a pardon—was voteless but still influential, was firing continually, most of the time with the nagging persistence of a machine-gun but now and then like a bomb that seemed to have power to demolish the delegates and the building in which they had gathered. The business had to do with electing men to sit with the National Democrats in Baltimore. Albert R. Lamar was elected president of the convention. The mercury rose in the thermometers. Orators mirrored its readings. No decision was reached. Since division precluded the chance

of ultimate agreement in the matter of instructions, delegates were told merely to do their best for the party. Toombs and Stephens knew, however, that their policy had been defeated. When the names of the delegates were read, "Packed, by God!" cried Robert Toombs.

Alexander Stephens spent Sunday, July first, in Sparta with his brother. Though it was Linton's birthday and though there was a family celebration to honor the occasion, with children all over the place and Mary doing her best to play hostess and lead the conversation into lighter channels, the brothers managed to get in a deal of political talk. On his return to Crawfordville, Aleck in a letter to Linton took up the subject where he had left off.

"I am a little more depressed and low spirited than I have been for some time. This springs from the clear indications of the times, that the Southern people will most likely, in the coming presidential canvas, cast their lot with Mr. Greeley. This greatly increases the apprehension that I have felt for the last twelve years that our people are really incapable of self government; that they do not possess the essential requisites, the necessary intelligence, virtue, and patriotism. No people can be free long, no self governing people, I mean, who do not study and understand the principles of the government, and who do not have virtue and patriotism to maintain these principles.

"The reflection that our people—the Southern people—are getting ready and ripe for a master is a sad one to me. But it presses heavily upon me just now and renders me not only depressed but gloomy in spirits sometimes."

He was fighting now with his pen. It was no longer possible for him to travel three thousand miles during a campaign and exhort the people from the stump. He must have realized that his words, well chosen as they were, backed as they were with constitutional law and historical facts, lost much when they appeared in cold print, divorced from

the magnetic personality that once had sent them straight from the platform into the hearts and minds of the audience.

Democrats met in Baltimore on July ninth, nominated Greeley and endorsed the Cincinnati Platform, which had been drawn by the Liberal Republicans, the Georgia delegates voting for Greeley and against the platform. A few days before, Stephens had written to J. Barrett Cohen, "Who would have believed that men who could not vote for Douglas then would be huzzahing for Greeley now? Did the world ever witness such a spectacle before?" He could see no reason why the Democrats should prefer Greeley to Grant. The President was now rectifying the mistakes of the early days of his administration. Greeley's past, moreover, was not such as should recommend him to southerners. Stephens remembered those ringing editorials of his against the Kansas-Nebraska Bill and the pronouncements in favor of the methods of the abolitionists. Had Greeley not advocated through his paper a war of subjugation even when the idea seemed preposterous to most northerners? Whatever might be his attitude now, he had favored the early reconstruction measures and the amendments that were obnoxious to the South, and he was on record as a supporter of the political rights of the negro. So Stephens wrote columns for his paper in the vain hope that people would read them.

After the fourteenth of July, he had no heart to put into the campaign, for it was then that Linton died. Members of Alexander Stephens's family still testify to the depth of the little man's grief. When the news was brought to him at Liberty Hall, he uttered one scream and then sat in dumb misery. Linton was dead—the baby he had watched, the little lad who had been unhappy with his foster parents and whom Aleck had adopted and educated, the young man who had distinguished himself at college, the lawyer, the legisla-

tor, and finally the judge, of whom the brother had been inordinately proud—Linton, who for forty years had been constantly in Aleck's thoughts, to whom he had written daily letters that had contained the outpourings of a lonely soul! Linton was dead! He groped toward the friends who were left. Toward Linton's wife and children. Toward Toombs. Toward Richard Johnston. Toward the nephews in Crawfordville. In letters he tried to find relief. Linton's wife had said the year before that Aleck seemed to have a charm against loneliness. His charm had been Linton. When Linton was alive, there was no loneliness. With pen in hand and paper before him, he could summon Linton's presence. And then would come the all-satisfying answers.

Dr. Ed Alfriend hurried to Liberty Hall to give account of Linton's brief illness, for the brother was too prostrated to attend the funeral in Sparta. Then in letters Alexander Stephens poured out his grief. He begged Mary to bring the children to Crawfordville the next Sunday. He urged her to preserve Linton's papers with all care. Hour after hour he sat at his desk writing.

"How long I can survive it, God in his infinite mercy alone knows. . . . Heretofore when heavy affliction of any sort came upon me, he was my prop and stay. . . . Toward him I constantly turned for relief and comfort. . . . The bitter consciousness that I shall never see him again! . . . I have no one to whom I can look for support in distresses of body and mind. . . . Why am I permitted to live? Why am I here hobbling about and Linton gone?"

Linton's wife accepted the invitation to visit Liberty Hall. She came at once, bringing the children with her. Alexander Stephens was sitting on the side piazza when Harry brought them into the yard. "I can never forget the impression made upon me by that sad welcome," writes

Madame Claude M. Stephens, Linton's second daughter. "His sympathy for us was indeed keen, but his own grief seemed to check the power of speech. The tears rolled down his cheeks, and the plaintive voice could utter but one word—my father's name." Mary must have told him then of the letter Linton had written years ago to her mother. "My brother is the wisest and best man I ever knew in my life," he had said. "I don't know, even in history, any person who exceeded him in wisdom and goodness. To think, and know, that I have the whole heart of such a person is my blessed privilege." That there could be no regrets must have brought a measure of solace.

Fortunately the needs of poor old Uncle Ben rescued Alexander Stephens from the sloughs of self-pity. The negro who had been with the Stephenses when Linton was born and whom Mr. Stephens was keeping as a pensioner at the Old Homestead, appeared to be grieving himself to death. Alexander Stephens sent a doctor to see Ben and then went himself. The visit to the grief-stricken old negro was bracing. One had to live on, no matter how desolate life might be. Finally he plunged again into editorials for *The Atlanta Sun*.

Georgia went for Greeley, but Grant was elected. It was all right. Nothing was really a matter of great moment. Yet one must work, work, work, and think of oneself as little as possible.

December, 1872! Alexander Stephens was in Atlanta. People were thronging to see him, asking him to speak, showing that they still loved and esteemed him, even though they had not followed his leadership or kept his paper from going on the rocks. It was all very helpful. And heaven knows he needed comfort. The publishing venture had absorbed most of the very considerable money he had made from the sale of his books. Almost forty thousand

dollars had been the royalties from the *Constitutional View*. The *School History* had also been profitable. Yet notes pressed upon him for payment. Since Linton's death, he had been more than ever prodigal in his charities. It had become impossible to refuse any call for help. He was still educating young men and women. Now the debts.

Then one night Robert Toombs dashed in and threw some papers into Stephens's lap.

"Here, Aleck," he said, "are those notes. Use them to light the fire."

News of his friend's financial plight had reached Bob Toombs in Washington, Georgia. He had come forthwith to Atlanta, routed out Stephens's creditors, purchased the notes to the tune of thousands of dollars—and now he was gaily tossing them to Aleck. With a friend like Bob Toombs, life could not be altogether desolate.

Politics had absorbed Stephens once. There was a very good chance that it might again prove interesting. With Linton gone, he must keep busy—grindingly, goadingly busy.

"I'm going to run for the Senate," said Stephens.

"Bravo!" said Toombs, who had no more vote than a kitten. "We'll see the thing through."

"Either The New Departure or I shall die politically in Georgia," said Stephens.

"You die in Georgia!" laughed Toombs. "Try to think up another."

Little Aleck in his wheel-chair, rolling through the halls of the general assembly! Little Aleck, on crutches, fighting the Republicans and the Democrats who dared to talk of coalition with the enemy! The legislators applauded the gallant spirit. The people were deeply touched. Ben Hill, however, who had not forgotten that Stephens was his enemy, also announced himself for the Senate, as did John B. Gordon, Herbert Fielder and A. T. Akerman. Again

Little Aleck was a man without a party, for the Democrats of Georgia had declared in favor of The New Departure. Gordon, as an ex-Confederate general and a much younger man than Stephens, had a powerful following. The galleries were packed for the voting, with people cheering wildly for their favorites. The roll was called for the first ballot. Gordon—84; Stephens—71; Hill—35; Akerman—14; Fielder—8. With so many odds against him, Little Aleck's vote was remarkable. On the succeeding ballots Stephens gained strength. The shouting in the galleries and on the floor was so great that it was hard to hear the answers to the roll-call. Over and over the legislators balloted for the necessary plurality. Afterward it was said that once Stephens was ahead by a single vote. The roll was called again and again, with legislators somersaulting from one candidate to another. Finally Gordon—112, Stephens—86. Little Aleck had been defeated. He was content, he said, for Ben Hill had been beaten, and The New Departure in Georgia had been killed.

That night Toombs stormed into Stephens's room. "It's all fixed, Aleck," he said. "You are to run for Congress to fill the place left vacant by the death of Ranse Wright. There isn't going to be any opposition."

The next day the *Constitution* raised Stephens's name for the place. That, of course, was the work of Bob Toombs. Then Toombs announced in the same paper that Stephens would stand for Congress. The numerous other aspirants dropped out of the race. Bob Toombs, disfranchised though he was, had not lost his political genius.

Yet the very next spring Stephens came near having an altercation with his friend. Toombs said something affecting the original lessees of the Western and Atlantic Railroad, which Stephens interpreted as a reflection upon the part he had played in the transaction. Instead of writing to Toombs, he rushed into print, resenting the fancied impu-

tation. But Toombs made no public reply. He merely sat down and patiently wrote a detailed explanation of what he had meant. Then, of course, all was well again. Bob was always patient with Aleck. In fact, it has been said that outside his own family Alexander Stephens was the only person with whom Robert Toombs was ever patient.

Alexander Stephens was back in Congress. He had made his race from his wheel-chair. Because of his fear of draughts, he was never seen without his high hat—not at church, not on the platform. Frequently he would have to pause in his speaking to sip brandy, but he never did so without saying first, "Here's to Jeffersonian Democracy!" There were persons in the North who were horrified that Stephens was back in Congress. Scarcely eight years after Appomattox, the Vice-President of the Confederacy helping to make the laws of the country! Republican papers were generous in their comments, though scarcely charitable. "Alexander Stephens does not emulate the modesty of the rose," wrote the *Commercial Advertiser*. "He positively refuses to 'pine upon the bush.' He is not only ready to be plucked, but means to oblige somebody to pluck him. He feels that his dear Georgia can not get along without him in Washington. . . . This little irrepressible human steam engine, with a big brain and scarcely any body, is one of the most accomplished parliamentarians the world has ever seen." So the *Advertiser* concluded with the words, "Let him come back."

Little Aleck was not asking any one's permission, however, to resume his old place among the solons of the country. Nor had he any intention of emulating the rose. He had always given voice to his convictions. Just this he intended to do. At the session before his entrance upon his second congressional career, a bill had been passed by Congress raising the salaries of the President and the members

of the two houses. The "Salary Grab" the people had called it. Because of the wide-spread criticisms of the increases granted, some of the members had refused to accept the larger salaries. A motion for the repeal of the bill was before the House almost immediately after Alexander Stephens reached Washington. He opposed it and backed his stand with forceful arguments. Congressmen were expected to live in a certain style, he said, to give entertainments that were embarrassing to their incomes. With the lobby for ever on hand, the temptation to accept bribes was great. Alexander Stephens could make bold to say that sort of thing, for there was no man who had ever accused him of dishonesty. It was still true that the unpopularity of a measure had no power to influence him.

That was the year of the great post-war panic, when it was a comfort to belong to the minority party that could not be held responsible for the condition of the country. Under the Republican régime, there had been boom after boom until at last American enterprise exceeded American capital. Then came that terrible Sunday in September when the President and William A. Richardson, Secretary of the Treasury, conferred all day at the Fifth Avenue Hotel in New York with leading business men and financiers, who thronged the corridors, beseeching the President to increase the currency by every means in his power and declaring that nothing else could avert national bankruptcy. But the President seemed unable to meet the emergency. The stock exchange remained closed for eight days. After the partial recovery of Wall Street, came the commercial crisis, which for five years paralyzed the industries of the country. Business was at its worst when Stephens reached Washington in December, 1873. Therefore, it took a deal of bravery to declare himself in favor of the salary increases. He was dealing again with principle and not with the question of temporary expediency.

Eighteen hundred and seventy-four! An inevitable consequence of the financial panic and subsequent depression under the Republican administration had been Democratic victories at the polls. Again the Democrats were in control of the House. A Civil Rights Bill, passed by the Republican Senate, was sent across for the approval of the congressmen. Its object was to force the whites of the South to sit beside the blacks in public conveyances, in theaters, in schools, to eat with them in hotels, and to lie beside them in cemeteries, stopping just short of providing for racial equality in the next world. On January fifth Stephens, leaning upon his crutches, spoke against the bill. New members listened to the queer little man with awed interest. Congressmen who had served with him before the war saw that Little Aleck had not changed a great deal. The speech had been prepared with the accuracy and thought that had characterized all the others that he had delivered in the House. Though the face was now traced by many lines and though the hair was snow white, the voice still rang out in shrill clearness. Stephens still knew the Constitution of the United States. As of old, he could explain wherein a law was unconstitutional. This he was doing in the matter of the Civil Rights Bill in such a way that the man who runs might understand. In addition, the bill was inexpedient. The negroes in the South did not desire to mix socially with the whites. When Congress adjourned, the bill had not reached a vote. Nine years later, however, the Supreme Court of the United States in a decision rendered upon another civil rights bill was to uphold Stephens's contention that the legislation was unconstitutional.

The attention of Congress was being called to Louisiana, where carpetbag-negro rule had continued since 1868. Because the black population of the state exceeded the white by about two thousand, it had been easy for corrupt leaders of both races to swing the elections in their favor. Taxa-

tion was so high in the state and poverty among the formerly well-to-do so great as to amount practically to confiscation of the lands of the better classes. With a returning board, composed of the carpetbag governor and lieutenant-governor and the secretary of state, empowered to cast out precincts in which they detected fraud, it was impossible for Louisianians to get justice at elections. A bloody attempt at revolution in the summer of 1874 and a contested election that fall called forth congressional investigation. The report of the Republican committee, presented to Congress on February 23, 1875, dwelt upon the southern "outrages" which were the sole remaining arguments for continuing military rule in the conquered states. Yet the other facts contained in the report constituted an indictment of the congressional policies of reconstruction. Because of the Republican bias evident, many Democrats opposed acceptance of the report. Not Alexander Stephens, however! Despite the party alignment on the question, he welcomed the report, as a basis for further investigation. By his vote the scale was tipped. Though there was some censure at the time by fellow Democrats, he was later to see his stand vindicated when the House unanimously condemned the returning board of Louisiana and inaugurated the policy that made rehabilitation of the state possible.

Throughout the year Stephens had engaged in an acrimonious controversy with his most indefatigable enemy. Ben Hill had made a speech in which he had arraigned Stephens for his attitude during the war and in which he had made some startling statements purporting to give the "unwritten history" of the Hampton Roads Conference. The battle conducted through the press proved that neither antagonist had been mellowed by the years. In the use of invective Stephens and Hill were both at their best.

July, 1876! The great International Centennial was

being held in Philadelphia. The month before, the Republicans, meeting in Cincinnati, had nominated Rutherford B. Hayes as their candidate for the presidency and the Democrats in St. Louis had nominated Samuel J. Tilden. The acrimony of the campaign was counteracting the good effect that peace lovers had hoped would result from the celebration in Philadelphia.

While the country was tossed by the political storm, there was peace at Liberty Hall. Marse Aleck, who had been confined to his bed for nine months, following a desperate illness diagnosed as pneumonia, was better. Indeed, it appeared that he would regain the good health that had been his the summer before, when he had been well enough to travel through the state, making speeches and shaking hands with the thousands of people who seemed about to canonize him. It had done his friends good to see how pleased Little Aleck had been—happier, in fact, than they had thought he ever could be with Linton gone. Then the terrible illness. Now Eliza boasted that Marse Aleck was eating the food she prepared for him. "I goes into his room ebery day an' axes him, 'Marse Aleck, what ya want fer dinner?' When he tell me he don't want nothin', I jes' goes out and ketches me a nice young pullet, an' I breaks up de bones an' puts dat pullet on to mek a nice chicken soup an' I meks some nice corn muffins an' cooks dem as brown as a berry. Den atter while I hears dat wheel-chair grindin' 'long de piazzy, an' sees Marse Aleck at de do' an' I hears him say, 'Liza, dinner ready?' an' I says, 'Yas, Marse Aleck, I done cook jes' what ya tole me to,' an' Marse Aleck kin eat what I cooks him."

After the long months of illness, it was good to see Marse Aleck again on the piazza. He would rise at nine, and, after dressing with the assistance of the serving boy, he would be rolled on to the side piazza. Then the game of whist. Fortunately, there were always guests to be com-

mandeered. At eleven Little Aleck would return to his room for the rest that enabled him to preside at the dinner table.

In July Richard Johnston arrived for a visit at Liberty Hall. This meant a great deal of excellent conversation between games and much reading aloud while Alexander Stephens rested in obedience to doctor's orders.

It was a lazy Sunday afternoon. On the side piazza Alexander Stephens sat with his friend. A pleasant breeze was blowing across the lawn and rustling the leaves of the great oaks near the house. The negroes of the surrounding counties were celebrating the Fourth of July at a church near by. Word had come just before dinner that they would like to visit Mr. Stephens in the afternoon and sing to him some of their spirituals. At half past two the procession wound its way around the house, preceded by the Crawfordville band. The lawn was filled with negroes, wearing their gay cheap finery, and their holiday smiles. Mr. Stephens nodded his greeting. Then a young negro mounted the steps and led the singing. Such singing it was! Three thousand voices blended in perfect harmony. Africans improvising as they sang! Missing not a note! Bodies swaying rhythmically! Christian thoughts put to mystic music brought from the jungles of Africa! A childlike race losing itself in song! Forgetting the back-breaking days under the scalding southern sun! Forgetting the long years of bondage! Singing of the heaven in which their simple hearts believed! Closing their eyes and visioning a day when there would be no work, when, white-robed, they would loll along the golden streets through gloriously idle days!

Tears traced their ways through the furrows of Alexander Stephens's cheeks. He loved these people, and they loved him. They loved him!

Would Mr. Stephens speak to the people? inquired the song leader. Mr. Stephens would of course, though he was

too weak to stand. Leaning forward upon the banister of the piazza, he addressed the assemblage in words that pierced the stillness of the summer afternoon. He was proud, he said, of the progress the colored people were making. He rejoiced that there was good feeling between the two races that lived side by side in Georgia. With freedom had come new responsibilities, he said. In every way they must strive to lift themselves higher and higher. They must learn to read. They must educate their children. On and on he spoke earnestly until exhaustion overcame him. Then the procession filed past, and negroes touched the frail hand that was extended to them.

Later when Richard Johnston sat beside his bed, Alexander Stephens said that no other celebration had ever delighted him so much as that which had just taken place on his lawn. "If it had been God's will, I could have almost wished to die while listening to that music."

Though Little Aleck suffered a relapse that summer, the Democratic convention of his district nominated him again for Congress. For his constituents it was enough to know that Little Aleck was still alive.

Eighteen hundred and seventy-seven! The country was in a furore of excitement. No one knew whether Tilden or Hayes had been elected president of the United States. Congress had wrangled and argued and had at last left the decision to an electoral count committee, consisting of five members from the Senate, five from the House, and five from the Supreme Court.

In the House had sat Alexander Stephens, watching the count with his judicial eye and with an ear ever ready to detect the least violation of the sacred Constitution. Each morning he was wheeled into the speaker's room about an hour before the opening of the session. Later his chair would be placed in the open area in front of the speaker's

desk. There he would remain protected from the draughts by his high hat and his greatcoat.

"A little way up the aisle," wrote a newspaper correspondent, "sits a queer-looking bundle. An immense cloak, a high hat, and peering somewhere out of the middle a thin, pale, sad face. This brain and eyes enrolled in countless thicknesses of flannel and broadcloth wrappings belong to the Honorable Alexander H. Stephens of Georgia. How anything so small and sick and sorrowful could get here all the way from Georgia is a wonder. If he were to draw his last breath any instant, you would not be surprised. If he were laid out in his coffin, he needn't look any different, only then the fires would have gone out in the burning eyes. Set as they are in the wax-white face, they seem to burn and blaze. Still, on the countenance is stamped that pathos of long continued suffering which goes to the heart. That he is here at all to offer the counsel of moderation and patriotism proves how invincible is the soul that dwells in this shrunken and aching frame."

There was considerable doubt as to the rightness of the mode by which the national election was to be decided. At four o'clock on the morning of March second, the committee rendered its report—one hundred and eighty-five votes for Hayes, one hundred and eighty-four votes for Tilden. On March 4, 1877, Hayes was inaugurated president of the United States. The Democrats were furiously indignant. From coast to coast they were crying that a fraud had been committed against them. Then the voice of Alexander Stephens rose above the hubbub, pleading for acquiescence in the decision. "We had a first-rate case," he said, "but we lost it by imperfect pleadings." It would be better to fall in line, support the new President and gather strength for the next election. *The International Review* of January, 1878, carried a long and carefully prepared article written by Alexander Stephens in which the southern statesman explained the constitutionality of the mode by which the

decision had been reached and registered his acceptance of the verdict against the Democrats.

February 12, 1878—the seventieth birthday of Abraham Lincoln! A great throng had gathered in the House of Representatives for the unveiling of Carpenter's painting of Lincoln's *Signing of the Emancipation Proclamation*, which had been purchased by Mrs. Elizabeth Thompson and presented to Congress.

At two o'clock the assistant doorkeeper of the House of Representatives announced the arrival of the Senate. Preceded by the Vice-President and accompanied by the sergeant-at-arms, the senators entered. Seated in front of the Speaker of the House were the artist and the donor. James A. Garfield, of Ohio, made the brief presentation, and then the speaker of the occasion was introduced. It was none other than Alexander H. Stephens, the former Vice-President of the Confederacy. The House and the Senate and the audience that crowded the galleries were profoundly touched. The little man who had suffered for his South, who had spent five months wretched in a northern prison, was about to pay tribute to the Lincoln who had been his friend. He spoke from his wheel-chair. Yet his voice penetrated the House and the galleries. Of the man he said, "I knew Mr. Lincoln well. We met in the House in December, 1847. We were together during the thirtieth Congress. I was as intimate with him as with any other man in that Congress except perhaps one. That exception was my colleague, Mr. Toombs. Of Mr. Lincoln's general character I need not speak. He was warm-hearted; he was generous; he was magnanimous; he was most truly as he afterwards said on a memorable occasion, 'with malice toward none, with charity for all.'"

Of slavery he said, "Many errors existed in the institution. Whether emancipation would prove to be a boon or

a curse remained to be seen. Upon the subject of emancipation itself may here be stated that the pecuniary view, the politico-economic question involved, the amount of property invested under the system . . . weighed in my estimation no more than a drop in the bucket compared with the great ethnological problem now in the process of solution."

Upon the people he enjoined forbearance and the laying aside of prejudices. Slavery had its faults, "and most grievously has the country, North and South, for both were equally responsible for it, answered them." Now that the negroes had become our wards, North and South must be aware of the divine trust imposed upon both sections. "If the embers of the late war shall be kept a-glowing . . . then our late great troubles and disasters were but the shadow, the penumbra of that deeper and darker eclipse, which is to totally obscure this hemisphere and blight forever the anxious anticipations and expectations of mankind."

One of those who had suffered most because of the war was sending his voice across the chasm that divided his country and pleading for a bridge of friendship. The listening multitude could not fail to be impressed.

F. A. P. Barnard, President of Columbia College, wrote:

"I want to thank you with all my heart for your beautiful, judicious, and patriotic address on the presentation and reception of the Carpenter picture of Lincoln.

"It is indeed a marvelous thing how, after many trials, the South still continues to maintain her noble pre-eminence in statesmanship and in moral dignity."

At the moment Alexander Stephens was effectively advocating a project that would tend to unite the country. He was working diligently upon the Texas-Pacific Railroad Bill. Having begun his public life by advocacy of the Georgia Central Railroad, he said, he would like to end it with

the accomplishment of a project that would connect the East and the West.

March, 1878! Alexander H. Stephens was expected back from Washington. Little Mary Corry, five years old,—whose mother, née Mollie Stephens, had moved back to Crawfordville upon the death of her second husband—was wakened from the very sound sleep of babyhood. It was almost time for the train. Mary must be on hand, with other members of the family, to welcome Uncle Aleck. Though she was very young at the time and exceedingly sleepy, Mary Corry, now Mrs. Horace M. Holden, of Atlanta, remembers well the celebration that greeted Uncle Aleck's arrival and which had become a sort of ritual whenever the statesman returned from Washington.

As the train pulled in, Crawfordville's very excellent band was playing, the people were shouting, and torches flared through the darkness surrounding the little depot. Citizens carried Mr. Stephens to his carriage. The handsome gray horse, driven by the smiling Harry, led the procession. The band came next, playing its gay music. The people followed, waving their torches, shouting, singing. Here was a prophet who was "not without honor in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house."

Eighteen hundred and eighty! Little Aleck was still in Congress. John M. Graham, a young lawyer, who had gone to Washington as Mr. Stephens's secretary, recalls the busy days of the congressional session. The feeble little congressman from Georgia was alert to all that was going on at the capital. It was only when he was desperately ill that he was not wheeled into the House. He rode to and fro in a stylish little coupé, which the official ladies were for ever borrowing for their afternoon outings. According to Mr. Graham, Alexander Stephens was rather imposed upon in

this matter. It was easy to take advantage of such generosity as his. Then there were far too many callers at his apartment during the hours he should have been resting. Because no man gave more freely of advice that was firmly rooted in experience and in an unsurpassed knowledge of constitutional law, congressmen found it profitable to sit at his feet. And Alexander Stephens, enjoying the position he had won, pushed no one aside, though his strength was taxed by the many visitors. He was the friend of Jews and Catholics, and the Irish adored him, for in all his life he had never taken a stand that was characterized by sectarian motives. Two men were with him always, his secretary and his servant and namesake, Aleck Kent, the one attending to his enormous correspondence and the other to his physical needs.

Eighteen eighty-one! On March fourth James A. Garfield was inaugurated president of the United States. Alexander Stephens was again in Congress. He knew the President well and respected him. The two men had served together on the congressional rules committee. Stephens had heard the story of Garfield's early struggles and of the widowed mother who had built fences, plowed, spun, woven, paid off the mortgage on her farm, educated her children and brought them up in respectability. He honored the President for bringing that work-worn mother to live with him at the White House.

Shortly after the inauguration, Stephens, accompanied by his secretary, called on Mr. Garfield. Mr. Graham recalls vividly the impression made on him by the stalwart President. A big man was Garfield, with a stony blue eye and a handshake that was cordial and genuine. Immediately Alexander Stephens did the characteristic thing—he asked for the President's mother. Mrs. Garfield came at once, pleased that Mr. Stephens wanted to see her, pleased by his manner and bearing toward her. In a moment Mr. Gar-

field drew Mr. Stephens aside. There were several matters, he said, that he would like to discuss with him. The conference was cut short by the entrance of Mrs. McKinley and several other ladies whose presence made general conversation necessary. That was the only time during Garfield's short administration that Stephens talked in private with the President. He was profoundly affected by the tragedy that took place four months after the inauguration.

Mr. Stephens spent the summer of 1881 in Crawfordville. Resting from his strenuous days in Washington? By no means. With the secretarial assistance of John Graham, he was amplifying his *School History of the United States* into a book for adult readers, stressing as usual the constitutional and political struggles that lay behind the events which the other chroniclers had recorded. He had learned that work was the only antidote for miseries of the mind and body.

Life was flowing smoothly at Liberty Hall. Every comfort was provided there—even to the acetylene gas generated on the plantation. Eliza and Harry and their grown and half-grown children were still about the place. Three new servants were much in evidence—Henry Clay, Bill Anderson, and Spencer Alfriend, who had chosen the names of their former master or of a favorite hero. To the list of pensioners had been added a three-legged mule and a common dog Frank, who, like the tramps, knew where food and shelter were to be found. Friends still arrived on every train; and the children of nieces and nephews were constantly on hand. Marse Aleck or Uncle Aleck or Little Aleck—according to the relationship involved—ruled in merciful tyranny. He still had his whist whenever he asked for it, and he still scolded his partners relentlessly. Yet old Quinea O'Neal, The Parson, did exactly as he pleased. He potted about the garden; he played whist, of course; but at nine o'clock, whether or not he was in the midst of a hand,

he went to bed. Mr. Stephens had never found a way to bend the will of this beneficiary of his. Now that the old man had passed his ninetieth birthday, there was no use trying.

The girl whom his nephew John Alexander had married had a spirit which Mr. Stephens could not fail to admire. "Now look here, Uncle Aleck," she would say, "I'm perfectly willing to play whist with you, but I won't play if you fuss. Now remember, the first time you scold me, I'm going to stop."

"All right, all right," Mr. Stephens would agree, and then he would try very hard not to criticize her leads.

But the children held Uncle Aleck somewhat in awe. He was a very great man, they knew. He was a person you were supposed to obey without argument. Then, too, he was different from everybody else—so thin and queer-looking in that wheel-chair of his! They kissed him, of course, for that was expected of them now that he had overcome the inhibition or whatever it was that had made him repel the advances of his niece, Mollie, so many years before; yet they stayed out of his way as much as possible, because they knew they were supposed to do whatever Uncle Aleck suggested.

Little Sallie Stephens, for instance, the daughter of Lucinda Frances Hammack and the young soldier, Linton, didn't like pie. Now Uncle Aleck thought there was no such delicacy as pie and that all children should eat it, whether or no. Because there were always so many people at Liberty Hall, the children were served at second table. One day there was pie. Uncle Aleck being nowhere in the offing, Sallie pushed her piece aside. Just as the children left the dining-room, down the hall came Uncle Aleck, wheeling himself in his chair. "Well, children," he piped, "have you had your *pie*?"—emphasizing the last word with a squeaky rising inflection. Sallie hid behind the others. If

she admitted that she had had no pie, Uncle Aleck would call, "Eliza, get this child a piece of pie at once," and there would be nothing for her to do but eat the whole slice.

Despite all the hubbub about him, Alexander Stephens worked methodically upon his *History of the United States*.

Eighteen hundred and eighty-two! Summer again in Crawfordville. Alexander Stephens was at home. He had reached his seventieth year. His determination to retire from Congress had been announced. Since 1855 he had been declaring intermittently that he was ready to spend the remainder of his days peacefully at Liberty Hall. Now he meant exactly what he said. The people must cease to urge him. Washington was too far away. His strength was unequal to the frequent trips back and forth.

Because the Democrats of Georgia could not answer the arguments he advanced, his district agreed not to renominate him. Then came the counter-plan. Georgia had another position that needed to be filled with the right man. The Democrats would make him governor of the state. According to Mr. Graham, who was still his secretary, Mr. Stephens, when approached early in 1882, had refused to become a candidate. Later, when much pressure was brought to bear on him, he consented to run, provided the demand continued to be wide-spread and insistent. Finally the nomination was made by a body of Independent Democrats, as well as by the regular Democratic organization. Then it was that Mr. Stephens felt that he could not refuse to accept it.

So, despite his perennially expressed desire to retire from public life, Alexander H. Stephens was again in the arena. Indeed, there seemed to be unanimity in the wish that he become the governor of Georgia.

The first appearances proved deceptive. Two years before, a rift had occurred in the Democratic Party of the

state, which had not closed. During his first term, Governor Colquitt—who was, by the way, the son of the Judge Walter T. Colquitt whom the young Stephens had worsted in debate back in 1843—had been censured for placing the state's endorsement upon the bonds of the Northeastern Railroad. The investigating committee, the appointment of which the Governor had demanded, had branded the rumors of improper conduct on the part of Colquitt as "vile and malignant slanders." Nevertheless, the anti-Colquitt camp had grown more and more violent. The resignation of Senator Gordon had been accompanied by a scandal, for Colquitt appointed as Gordon's successor none other than the redoubtable Joe Brown, who had returned to the Democratic fold. It was said that Gordon had resigned in order to get favors from Brown and that Colquitt had appointed Brown for the influence that the former Governor could wield in his behalf. Alexander Stephens believed that Gordon had resigned because he had a chance to make a fortune in Oregon and that Colquitt, having tried to dissuade him, had appointed Brown unconditionally.

Colquitt's campaign for reelection had been bitter. The Democratic nominating convention had given the incumbent Governor a majority of votes but not a plurality. When a parliamentary tangle had ensued, Alexander Stephens, as one of the delegates to the convention, had suggested bringing in a dark horse as a compromise. But Colquitt had stood firm. After thirty-three ballots, the convention adjourned, Colquitt still lacking nine votes of a plurality. It had been rumored that Stephens would enter the race. Finally, the Democratic committee of the minority reported Thomas Manson Norwood as their candidate. Mr. Norwood had been among those who during the war had been against Brown's opposition to the policies of President Davis. It was he who before the Georgia legislature answered Linton Stephens on conscription. After the war he had added his

voice to the denunciations of Brown's apostasy. He had since served in the United States Senate and in the House of Representatives. In the campaign Brown was not only promoting Colquitt but evening scores with Norwood. Those must have been bitter days in Georgia that preceded the reelection of Governor Colquitt. The daughter of the defeated candidate, Mrs. Anna Hendree Norwood McLaws, who now lives in Richmond, recalls her father's humorous accounts of the divisions in families—sons voting against fathers, brother against brother, a row among Democrats who had thought themselves for ever united by the so recent carpetbag rule.

Two years later Stephens was inheriting all the animosities that the last gubernatorial fight had left in its wake. His opponents, who must have known that the lonely little man was trying to escape from himself through work, were charging Stephens with unsatisfied ambition. Unsatisfied ambition indeed! Had he not all his life refused the positions of highest responsibility? Might he not once have been nominated for the presidency of the United States? Could he not by the utterance of one word have been made president of the Confederate States? The newspapers were digging up the stands he had taken during the war and during reconstruction, misquoting things he had said, misinterpreting his motives. It was all very hard for the sick little man, who had been kept alive by the admiration his constituents had given him. The negro vote that had figured largely in the last campaign, would figure in this. Two years before Brown, a sometime Republican, had worked for Colquitt. The candidate, a Methodist and sort of lay preacher, had frequently spoken to the negroes in their churches. Mr. Norwood, it seems, had made little effort to enlist the support of the negroes. So it was thought that the freedmen largely influenced the result of the election throughout the state.

On August twelfth Georgia paused to pay homage to Ben Hill, who had died. Stephens had buried the hatchet that had been in use since 1855, and had visited Hill in his last illness. There was just time before *The History of the United States* went to press for Stephens to insert a tribute to the most formidable of his antagonists. He followed a biographical sketch of the man by saying, "He took an active part against the reconstruction measures . . . and some of the ablest papers against the constitutionality of these measures were prepared by his pen. He possessed oratorical gifts in an eminent degree. In power of statement and force of invective, he had few if any superiors." Since no one in Georgia had suffered more because of Hill's force of invective, who was better able than Alexander H. Stephens to testify to the man's powers?

With the history completed, Little Aleck set out upon his canvass. It seems incredible that a man so old and sick and weary should have been able still to hold the multitudes as he spoke to them from his wheel-chair. The brain was clear; the voice had not lost its carrying power. In Atlanta an enormous audience listened attentively to the review of his long public record. He spoke from the piazza of Liberty Hall to a crowd that had gathered to hear him, among which there were many negroes.

"I have never been beaten when I have come before the people," he cried. "Is my own county going to let me be beaten now?"

"Naw, sah!" cried Cy Stephens, and a chorus of voices echoed the word "Naw!"

Gartrell, who was running in opposition, was claiming the negro vote. Alexander Stephens did not believe that the negroes would go solidly against him, and he was not mistaken. On election day the ballot-box was brought to Liberty Hall that he might cast his vote. That night he knew that he had been elected.

Autumn, 1882! Alexander Stephens was ensconced in the Governor's mansion along with his dogs, his negroes and his relatives. On the evening before the inauguration, reporters who had gone to Crawfordville to accompany the Governor-elect to Atlanta, rendered playful by the liquors they found in Mr. Stephens's sideboard, made merry with the ever-present tramp, who happened to be passing the night at Liberty Hall. This was no ordinary tramp partaking of southern hospitality—he was a "Massachusetts Yankee," who had been directed to the place where food and lodging were freely dispensed. The reporters had got the poor fellow drunk and then had encouraged him to talk. What he said had amused them hugely, for it was a diatribe against the South, against those who had been at the head of the Confederacy, against the very man who was at the moment befriending him. The tramp boarded the special train for Atlanta the next day, still casting aspersions upon the South, still egged on by the reporters, though Alexander Stephens protested that advantage was being taken of his guest. Later when some one made inquiry concerning the strange passenger, the Governor-elect replied, "He is a poor fellow who has nothing and wants to get work. I had no employment for him in Crawfordville, and I told him to come along with me to Atlanta, and I would see what I could do for him there."

Mrs. John A. Stephens kept house at the mansion and acted in the capacity of official hostess. She was powerless, however, to keep the crowds away from the Governor. Little Aleck, as a matter of fact, didn't want them kept away. So all day long the bell was ringing, and guests were being admitted. His Excellency was too soft-hearted to refuse the suppliants. Indeed, he was putty in the hands of those who asked pardons for relatives. Having once been in prison, he had infinite compassion for others in the same plight.

Judge Alexander W. Stephens, now on the Georgia Court of Appeals, then a lad of nine, remembers those days in the mansion. His father, John A. Stephens, who had been appointed adjutant-general of the state, declared that "every grand rascal in Georgia hung around Uncle Aleck" and took advantage of his boundless sympathy. Certain it was that the tramps and beggars frequented the mansion just as they had frequented Liberty Hall. Young Aleck was present when a poor woman arrived, begging a pardon for her husband. She had no money, she said. Her children were hungry. "Aleck, hand me my purse," said the Governor. "Here're two dollars. It's all I have." Judge Stephens is not sure that the woman secured the pardon also. The chances are that she did.

The dogs at the mansion proved to be the sources of considerable trouble. Besides those that belonged to the Governor, there were two that young Aleck had brought with him. Prince was the one that the boy loved especially, though the dog was a fice of no great beauty or remarkable lineage. Uncle Aleck had named him, by the way, according to a rite of his own, which consisted in placing slips of paper in a hat and drawing therefrom. Nevertheless, when the chief of police of Atlanta complained that Prince had bitten him, Uncle Aleck was quite exasperated. Whereupon, he commanded the negro man, Mott, to get rid of Prince. Mott, knowing his master far better, it seemed, than did the disconsolate small boy, merely took the dog home with him that night. The next morning at breakfast Prince was not among the dogs that crowded around the Governor, begging for food.

"Where's Prince?" demanded his Excellency.

"I done took him home wid me," replied Mott.

"Well, bring him back at once," was the executive decree, "and get muzzles for all the dogs. I won't have the police of this city bitten."

So young Aleck began to see that there was a way of getting around Uncle Aleck. Nevertheless, he was still somewhat in awe of the great little man in the wheel-chair. This same Prince was the cause of further embarrassment. Like Mary's lamb, he had the habit of following children to school. One day Aleck did not discover him until well away from the house. Returning, he rang the bell a number of times before the servants, who knew exactly who was calling them from their breakfast, deigned to answer. After the dog had been pushed inside, Aleck, according to a small boy's idea of retaliation, rang the bell several more times before hurrying to school. When he returned that afternoon, the servants told him maliciously that Marse Aleck wanted to see him. Aleck knew exactly what had happened. The Governor had heard the persistent ringing of the bell and had made inquiry. The servants, in their annoyance, had presented a good case against young Aleck. The boy declared defiantly that he wasn't going alone into Uncle Aleck's room. So he sent his Aunt Mollie Corry to do the explaining. Later he heard that his mother went also and told Uncle Aleck that as long as she remained in official capacity, her children must consider the mansion their home and that the servants must answer the bell promptly when they rang it. "All right, all right," the Governor had agreed. There can be no doubt that Mrs. John A. Stephens was just the person to manage both the household and the Governor and that of this no one was more fully convinced than Alexander H. Stephens.

Perhaps the weary little man should have been resting at Liberty Hall. Yet perhaps it was better that he was occupied unto the last with the people he loved and with the interests that had always filled his life. Perhaps if the quiet days had ever come to him, he would have had little relish for them. He had been but twenty-four when he entered the state legislature. Then the "Fiery Epoch" was dawning.

The days of his life were threescore years and ten. There had been much of labor and much of sorrow. He had witnessed the evening of the Fiery Epoch—the storm, in the twilight hour and then the new day. The country was at peace once more. Yet Little Aleck was still busy. In his heart he must have known that it was better so. Stephens knew that the dreaded centralization of power in the hands of the federal government had come to pass. The states, with their varying traditions and their widely different people, were to be ruled from Washington, it seemed. Though Stephens had lived through the enactment of the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments, he was to be spared such consummation of his fears as was expressed in the eighteenth. It is likely that he still half-hoped for a reaction that would bring about reaffirmation of the principles of local self-government, which the framers of the Constitution had endeavored to secure.

Came an invitation to deliver an address at the Sesquicentennial celebration in Savannah. The historic occasion, commemorating the hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the landing of Oglethorpe, appealed strongly to the man who had so long served his state. So the Governor went to Savannah. The city had cast off the gloom of recent years. Flags and banners fluttered from stores and houses. Holiday crowds thronged the streets. Companies of soldiers, outfitted in new uniforms, paraded in military procession. From a gaily fastooned platform the gallant little statesman delivered his valedictory.

The theme that had underlain all his public utterances was still dominant. "Our object on this occasion is to celebrate and honor, not only the founders of the colony, but the principles upon which our institutions were based." He quoted from Oglethorpe's charter, which he besought the people never to forget. He gloried in the thought that Georgia had been settled by the poor and destitute, who in-



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creased in wealth and population under the free institutions they had established. Graphically he sketched the history of his Georgia and the stories of the great men who had contributed thereto. And the last words that Little Aleck was ever to speak publicly were the far vision of a man ripe in years and understanding, and yet they mirrored the high dreams of youth. "By our past energy, industry, under our institutions, we have already acquired the appellation of the Empire State of the South. With like energy in the future, under Providence, in the development of our resources, our mineral, our agricultural, our fields and forests, our educational and religious institutions, we have yet ahead of us the opportunity of acquiring the greater appellation of the Empire State of the Union."

Then Little Aleck returned to Atlanta to die. He lingered two weeks, however, never losing his contact with the affairs of state, unto the last signing his name in those strange hieroglyphics that represented the words *Alexander Stephens*. Among the letters that reached him was one from Robert Toombs, sending congratulations upon the masterful way in which Aleck had sketched the history of Georgia. The Governor knew that the letter had been dictated, for his old friend had almost completely lost his sight.

The Governor's room had been converted into a workshop. In place of the Louis the Fourteenth bed used by his predecessors, which the Governor had declared entirely too reminiscent of Bourbon luxury, were two iron cots—one for Aleck Stephens and one for Aleck Kent, the servant. Against the wall were rows of files, which the family accused Uncle Aleck of purchasing from the descendants of Noah. The rest of the furnishings were quite too plain to be called gubernatorial, but they suited the tastes of a man who was using his bedroom as a workshop. Colonel C. W. Seidell, the private secretary, brought news from the offices and from the state, and Aleck Kent hovered about, pressing up-

on his master food and other attentions, while the Governor protested, "Aleck, didn't you ever hear that you should never feed a horse till he whinnies?"

Then at last came delirium. The mind, that had never been clouded during all the many illnesses of that seventy years, had slipped back to the great era that had preceded the war. Though the words were not distinct, it was clear that Alexander Stephens was again in Congress, pleading for the moderation that could avert the disaster he was foreseeing.

"The Governor is dying," said Doctor Steiner.

The family and closest friends gathered about.

"Doctor, you are hurting me," said Little Aleck.

And then a bit later, "Get ready—we are nearly home."

While the body of Little Aleck lay in state at the capitol, it seemed that all the people of Georgia filed by to pay a last tribute to the man who had served them in high devotion and whom they loved as their own. Flowers filled the room and covered the roller chair that stood empty beside the coffin.

At the services in the capitol, men who had been the political friends and foes of Alexander Stephens paid their verbal tributes to the great Georgian. Then the cortège filed through the crowded streets of the city—all the officials of the state, the military companies, citizens in carriages and on foot. At the grave Robert Toombs, massive and tottering and almost totally blind, wept aloud and then chokingly delivered the oration. "He was more the child of his country than any man that ever lived," said Robert Toombs, whose fire had been extinguished by age and grief. "He was always determined to live for his country."

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